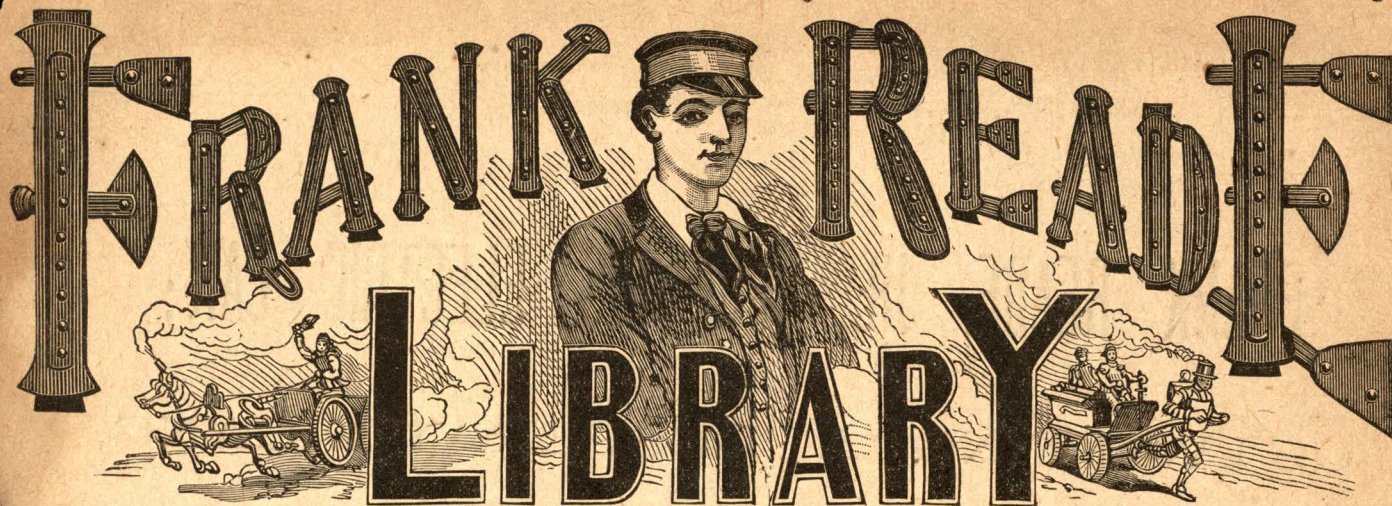


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Frank Reade, Jr.,

AND HIS ELECTRIC CAR;

Or, Outwitting a Desperate Gang.

By "NONAME."



The coon was staring ahead intently and managing the wheel with the skill of a veteran, when he suddenly caught view of a mustang going at full speed across the mesa they were traversing. There was a man tied to the animal's back, and the coon heard him shrieking for help. Frightened at the electric machine, the mustang suddenly wheeled around ahead of her and rushed along the road.

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FRANK READE, JR., AND HIS ELECTRIC CAR;

OR,

OUTWITTING A DESPERATE GANG.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Under the Equator From Ecuador to Borneo," "Frank Reade, Jr.'s 'Sky Scraper,'" "Under the Yellow Sea," "Frank Reade, Jr.'s Prairie Whirlwind; or, The Mystery of the Hidden Canyon," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE GOLDEN ANKLET.

"THE treasure is worth at least \$500,000, Reade."

"What! Half a million dollars? That's a fabulous amount."

"I can prove the fact. And we can easily get the gold, too."

"You mean by using my new electric car, don't you, Dunn?"

"Exactly. Now what is your decision? Will you go after it or not?"

Frank Reade, Jr. to whom this question was addressed, was pacing excitedly up and down the parlor of his handsome residence on that cold night in March, and his caller sat near a window narrowly watching him.

The youth was a rich and famous inventor of electrical contrivances, and was a dashing fellow, with a fine face, an athletic figure and possessed a bold, yet kind and generous disposition.

Charles Dunn was an old friend of Frank's, who had recently come from South America with a most startling story about a great treasure the location of which he had discovered.

His object was to induce Frank to help him get the gold.

Dunn was a man of about thirty, with a short, thickset form, clad in rough garments, his sun-burned face was adorned with a brown mustache, and he had rather sharp features, and deep set dark eyes.

The young inventor pondered over what his caller said, and then pausing before Dunn, he exclaimed:

"You say you just come from Central America, and tell me you know where the treasure is, yet give me no particulars, and expect me to fit out an expensive expedition. Why don't you give me the details, Charley?"

"Oh, that's easily done," laughed the other. "Just listen: a month ago to-day I was crossing Honduras from Choluteca, to Truxillo, on horseback, when I reached the remains of what had once been the little lonely mountain village of San Rosa. It was deserted and the score or so of adobe houses had fallen to decay. Not a soul was in the place for it had been ravaged by some fatal epidemic that killed its few inhabitants. Even the little Catholic church was in ruins, rank weeds filled the streets, lizards ran over the fallen masonry, and an air of utter desolation prevailed.

"It impressed me deeply, for I knew it was one of the oldest villages in Central America. Indeed, I had heard that the ruined little church had been built by the priests who had followed Hernando Cortez during the conquest of Mexico. Later I found this report proven strangely true. The historical reputation of the church led me to dismount from my horse and enter the building to examine it. As I drew near the altar, I observed a tablet in the wall, on which was inscribed in Latin, 'Guatemozin, son-in-law of Montezuma, and the Cacique of Tacuba.' I was astonished to find this church contained the tomb of those two noted men. As you must know, Frank, after the death of Montezuma, Guatemozin was elected emperor of Mexico, and was captured with the prince of Tacuba during the conquest. Cortez had sent one of his captains, Christoval de Olid to Honduras, to found a Spanish colony at Truxillo. Hearing that Olid was setting up an independent government there, Cortez organized an army and marched to Truxillo, taking Guatemozin and Tacuba with him. As the conqueror feared his royal prisoners would create insurrection, he hung them both during that great march. The bodies afterward were probably cut down, carried to this church of San Rosa, and buried there by one of the Franciscan priests who accompanied the terrible expedition. There is another point I wish to remind you of: the Spaniards tortured Guatemozin in an effort to make him reveal where

the fabulous treasures of Montezuma had so mysteriously disappeared to, when the empire was conquered."

"Yes," said Frank. "I know all those matters history."

"Then you will have greater faith in what I am going to tell you. The ancient Mexicans, you know, could read and write in their own way. Well, as I said, I saw that the tomb was that of Cortez's two noble victims. But to satisfy myself on the point, I seized the tablet, gave it a pull, and as it had become loose from old age, it readily yielded to my touch and came out. A square aperture was revealed. Lying within it was a coffin of stone, which probably had been constructed of clay and solidified with old age. It required all my strength to pull it out, but I finally succeeded, and lifted the lid off. Within laid the skeletons of two men.

"Upon the remains laid a golden shield, panaches, or clusters of helmet-plumes of the same ore, and several curious articles which had probably been worn as anklets, bracelets, and the like. Such rich things could only have belonged to grandees, and evidently had been in the possession of the two men when they were hung to the trees by the roadside. As many of Cortez's army were loyal Mexican Aztecs, it is not surprising that the bodies were thus carefully buried where I found them. I curiously examined the golden relics, and found that the bands of gold which had encircled the ankles of the largest skeleton, were engraved most artistically with peculiar symbols, then hardly decipherable. I took possession of the ornaments, returned the stone coffin to its receptacle, replaced the tablet and rode away. The shield I yet have home; the trinkets here in my valise. But to resume. I reached Truxillo, and there encountered a man who was familiar with the ancient Aztec writing, and hired him to read for me what was inscribed on the golden anklet. This man was a full-blooded Mexican, named Sancho Pedro. I was told he was a public letter-writer, but afterward discovered that he was a villain. He entered my room at the hotel that night, took the anklet, and read as follows:

"At my death I desire that the hidden gold of Montezuma be taken from its vault and given to the Caciques of our nation. The gold is to be found buried under the temple of——" But before the Mexican could read any more I snatched the anklet from his hand, fearing that if he read the rest he would go and get it himself. Sancho Pedro realized what a valuable relic that was for I had told him where I got it. He was wild when I prevented him reading the rest, drew a dagger, and made an attempt to murder me to gain possession of the anklet. I had him arrested and got another man to translate the rest when I reached New York. The continuation of the inscription said: 'The gold is to be found buried under the temple of the sun, in the city of Pahuatlan, on the mount of Zempoaltepec. It consists of ingots, and in weight is as much as forty slaves could carry. May God forgive the cruelties of the white race. Guatemozin.' Now should we presume that one slave carried only fifty pounds of gold, when it was removed from the city of Mexico, when the Spaniards came, forty would carry a combined weight of 2,000 pounds. That's clear, ain't it?"

"Yes," assented Frank.

"Upon inquiry," continued Charles Dunn, "I learned that the city in question was destroyed by an earthquake years ago, and most all traces of it were obliterated by a volcanic eruption of the mountain. There is now a race of Aztec Indians inhabiting the mountain who are hostile to the white race. To hunt for the gold might necessitate a fight with them. It seems that Sancho Pedro got out of jail and followed me to New York. There he strove to get the golden anklet away from me, and I drove him away again. He swore he would yet own

it and get that gold, if he had to kill me to accomplish his purpose. I gave him the slip, however, and came on here to interest you in the matter. I'm confident there is no humbug about the matter. If you will employ your electric machine to go after the gold, I will divide all we get with you."

"Let me look at the relics you got from the stone coffin," said Frank. "I've got a book here by which I can translate that inscription and satisfy myself of its being genuine."

"That's a fair test," assented Charley.

He opened his valise and took from it several discolored golden objects and laid them upon the table.

Frank closely examined them.

He saw at a glance that they were very antique.

The workmanship on them was marvelous, considering the age in which they were made, the broad, golden bands being beautifully chased and filigreed, while the chains were most handsomely wrought.

Rich carvings of the peculiar ancient Aztec symbols covered all the ornaments and the joints and patterns were of the finest.

It only required a short examination to convince Frank that these articles were genuine.

He then got a book of hieroglyphics and began to compare the inscriptions on the anklet with the figures in it.

When this study was finished the young inventor said quietly:

"I am convinced that these articles are not fraudulent. Your translation agrees exactly with the one I made. I feel sure you have made a most wonderful discovery, Charley."

"I'm glad you feel satisfied," replied the young man, smilingly.

"And don't you agree with me that it's worth investigation?"

"Most decidedly," answered Frank.

"Why don't you agree to go, then?"

"I can't, until I consult two friends who always go with me on my journeys. I'll summon them, and abide by their decision."

"Very well."

Frank rang a bell.

It was answered by a short darky with long arms, a good-natured face, and a pair of comical eyes, and he asked, as he entered:

"Yo' want dis chile, Massa Frank?"

"I've got something important to tell you and Barney. Summon him."

"Yassir," replied Pomp, ducking his woolly head, and withdrawing.

In a few moments he returned with Mr. O'Shea, who proved to be a rawboned Irishman, with a pug nose, a freckled face, and a mop of hair as red as fire.

Both the negro and the Irishman were loyal friends of the inventor, were addicted to practical jokes, enjoyed a good fight, and were very useful and entertaining in various ways.

"Beheavens?" the Irishman was saying as they entered, "if it's foolin' me yer bes, I'll be afther pullin' yer nose off, ye spalpeen!"

"Golly! yo' fink I'se such a blamed liar as yo' am?" demanded Pomp.

"I wish to lay a most important matter before you, boys," said Frank. "If you both agree, I'll undertake the job."

He then told them all that has been described.

When he finished, Barney said emphatically:

"Faix, it's fools we'd be not ter go afther ther gold!"

"Yassah," added Pomp. "I done say ter go!"

"That settles it! We will undertake the trip, Charley," said Frank. He had hardly given utterance to this remark, when suddenly there came a crash of glass, a pane in the front window was smashed, a hand shot through the opening, and the golden anklet was seized.

The next moment the mysterious arm was withdrawn, and they dimly saw the figure of a man on the piazza running away.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAN ON THE MUSTANG.

A CRY of alarm escaped the occupants of the parlor when they saw what the daring thief had done.

"Great heavens!" cried Charley. "Did you see his face?"

"No," replied Frank, hastily. "Did you recognize it?"

"Yes. It was Sancho Pedro, the Mexican."

"Bogorra, he has the anklet, afther all!" muttered Barney.

"Chase de skunk!" roared Pomp.

Out rushed the whole party, and dashing into the street they saw the rascal running away like a deer.

After him ran the four, but just as they turned the nearest corner they saw the man spring on the back of a horse and go galloping away out of the town of Readestown at a furious pace.

It was impossible to overtake him then.

Frank, however, thought of a means of apprehending him and rushing to the police station, he detailed what happened and an alarm was telegraphed to the authorities of the adjacent towns and cities to arrest the Mexican on sight.

Nothing further could be done then, so Frank and the rest returned home, there to discuss the robbery.

"Sancho Pedro must have tracked me here from New York," said Charley in disgust. "He was determined to have that golden anklet and learn its secret. Now he has got it at last."

"If the rascal escapes the police," said Frank, "he will go right back to Mexico, and set about to get the gold before we get to the place. That will end our expedition."

"But can't we forestall him by starting right off?" asked Charley,

excitedly. "We don't need the anklet now that we know where the treasure is to be found."

"That's a good suggestion. I'll follow it. Call at the house tomorrow morning, prepared to depart."

"Good enough! I'll be here."

"How we's gwine ter know if ther police catch him?" asked Pomp.

"Faith, it's an ignoramus yez are entiorely," said Barney. "Can't they send us ther loikes av a telegram or a letter, or a telephone message?"

"G'wan dar," growled Pomp. "If we's ridin' froo de country on de 'lectric car, how am it gwine ter reach us—hub?"

Barney scratched his head with a perplexed look on his face and gave up the conundrum, and Charley finally departed.

On the following day the news reached Frank from police headquarters that the Mexican had got away on a train to Boston, and there embarked on a steamer bound for Yucatan.

He was then out of reach, of course, but Frank comforted himself with the reflection that he and his companions could outstrip the Mexican in a race by going southward by rail.

As soon as Charley arrived the inventor told him the news, and they set to work packing the electric machine in cases for transportation with all necessary things for the journey.

By nightfall not only was the electric car shipped, but the four adventurers were aboard a train going over the continent.

They were swiftly carried as far as the city of Mexico, and although they were over a week reaching the place, they knew they had arrived before the thief could land and use his knowledge.

On the suburbs of the quaint old city, they secured the privacy of a courtyard in a building to unpack the cases and put the electric car together, in order to use her.

When the machine was ready, she presented a remarkable appearance as she was built of silvery aluminum.

She was named the Fox, and was in the form of a railway coach on seven wheels, with a rear platform, a rounded dome forward from which projected a pneumatic gun, and on top stood a search-light.

Her many windows were furnished with movable metal shutters pierced by loopholes, there were air-brakes at the flat cogged wheels, flexible springs made her ride easily over rough ground, and the driving wheels were geared to electric motors.

The body of the car contained a store-room, a combined cooking and dining apartment, and a parlor containing several berths.

Large tanks held the water supply, lockers were filled with canned food, and boxes held the arms, ammunition, tools, and other necessary articles.

The mechanism for operating her laid in a compartment under the floor, and comprised a dynamo, run by a powerful spring, which gave current for the wheels, heated the electric stove, illuminated the big search-light and incandescent lamps, and worked the fan motors.

Attached to that part of the gun within the turret, was an air-pump, the forward steering wheel was operated by a pilot's wheel in the turret, and the electric mechanism was controlled by a set of levers and switches secured to a board on top of the compass-binnacle.

It was nightfall when the Fox was ready for work.

Frank and his companions then embarked, and the young inventor entered the dome to start the engine, while Barney with a fiddle and Pomp with a banjo sat in the parlor playing a lively tune.

The inventor moved a lever putting the spring in operation; the armature of the dynamo whirled, generating an electric current, and when Frank turned a switch it flashed into the wheel motors.

Instantly the Fox rolled out into the street.

A number of civil guardsmen saw the electric sparks flying off her wheels, and considering that Frank must give an account of the Fox and show his passport, they rushed up to him, shouting:

"Halt! We wish to know about this machine!"

"I am in a hurry," answered Frank in Spanish. "Stand aside and allow me to pass. I will give you an accounting later on."

"No, senor, you must do so now."

"I refuse."

"We shall arrest you then!"

"You will have to catch me first!"

And so saying, Frank drove the Fox ahead at full speed.

He expected the soldiers would get out of the way, but they refused to do so, thinking he would not dare run into them.

The result was that the machine struck two of them and knocked them over.

A yell of rage and wounded dignity escaped the soldiers.

Every one of them got excited and denounced Frank fiercely.

Then the whole crowd made a rush for the machine, intending to arrest the inventor and his party.

Frank did not intend to submit to such a delay, however, and promptly put on full speed, driving the Fox ahead rapidly.

There was a big electric gong on the machine, and he rang it furiously to warn people ahead to clear the way.

"The fools!" exclaimed the inventor. "They thought I would stop and now they've got to pay for their folly."

"You'd better skedaddle!" laughed Charley, glancing back. "The soldiers are furious. There's a mob chasing us."

Through the street rushed the Fox.

A yelling crowd of civilians and soldiers ran after her.

They were quickly joined by some mounted troops, and the wild chase continued, all the pursuers yelling to Frank to stop.

He refused to obey.

Then the soldiers got angry.

They took the law into their own hands.

One of them discharged a carbine at the car.

It seemed to act as an incentive for the rest to follow suit.

Within a few moments shot after shot was discharged.

Many of the bullets struck the electric car, but as her plates were thick enough to resist rifle bullets, none of them pierced her.

"They are getting reckless!" exclaimed Frank.

"I never saw such excitable people before," Charley replied.

Just then Barney and Pomp rushed in, having heard all that transpired, and the Irishman exclaimed eagerly:

"Lave me have a gun! I'll drop wan av thim greasers—"

"No, no!" hastily said Frank. "If you fire back and injure any of them, we will soon have the whole city in an uproar, and the national guard chasing us."

"Lord amassy," growled Pomp, "am yo' gwine fo' ter let dem yere yaller coons pound us dis way an' say nuffin', Massa Frank?"

"It won't do any good to fight them. Their missiles can't reach us. I'll soon escape them. See, we are making forty miles an hour."

The Fox was setting a terrific pace now, and rapidly left her pursuers behind as she dashed out into the country.

A regular volley of shots was fired at her before she finally got out of range, and as none of the bullets did any damage, Frank uttered a quiet laugh, and remarked:

"We've beaten them after all."

"Most of the people afoot are out of the race," said Charley.

"An' dem yere hosses are gettin' lef', too," Pomp added.

"Faith, it's a pity I didn't git a welt at wan av their heads wid me black thorn stick!" regretfully said Barney, displaying a shillelah.

Frank directed the Celt to fill the lubrication cups of the generator, and put some vaseline on the commutator.

In half an hour more the machine had left its pursuers out of sight behind, and followed a country road to the southward.

Pomp was a fine cook, and then prepared their supper, after which the watch was divided like on ship board.

The Fox was then well launched upon her dangerous journey.

She sped along rapidly all night, and when morning dawned Barney was snoozing in a chair, and Pomp was steering, while Frank and Charley lay sleeping in their beds.

The coon was staring ahead intently and managing the wheel with the skill of a veteran, when he suddenly caught view of a mustang going at full speed across the mesa they were traversing.

There was a man tied to the animal's back in a prostrate position, and the coon heard him shrieking for help.

Frightened at the electric machine, the mustang suddenly wheeled around ahead of her and rushed along the road.

"Lard amassy! Looker dar!" roared Pomp excitedly.

"What is it?" demanded Barney, bounding to his feet.

"Somebuddy tie dat man on de horse's back!"

"Begorra, it's a dead man he'll be if wanst any accident do be afther happenin' ter ther mustang!" said Barney. "Chase it!"

"What yo' gwine ter do?"

"Save ther poor divil!"

The darky increased the speed of the Fox, and she went rushing on in hot pursuit of the terrified mustang.

CHAPTER III.

A DANGEROUS VISITOR.

THE unusual commotion aroused Frank and Charley, and they hastened into the turret to learn the cause of it.

One glance out the window explained the situation to them, and the young inventor noticed that the Fox was fast gaining on the mustang, although it ran at the top of its speed.

"Keep her steady, Pomp," he exclaimed. "Try to run her beside the animal, and I'll endeavor to cut the Mexican's bonds."

"De anmille am wounded in de flanks, sah," said the coon.

"Yes—I see. It looks as if it had been shot."

"Help! Help!" yelled the bound man, in frantic tones.

Frank secured a knife, and ran out on the rear platform where he took up a position on one of the steps.

Up to the mustang dashed the electric car, and with a frightened cry the animal swerved to one side to get away from it.

Pomp followed it with the Fox, and graded her speed to agree with that of the terrified beast.

In a few moments the inventor was alongside the mustang and as quick as a flash he cut the lariat which bound the man to its back and then pulled him off.

Away darted the beast, but the Mexican was left in Frank's hands and he landed the man on the platform.

"I've got you!" he exclaimed smilingly in Spanish.

"Gracias a Dios!" the man muttered.

In a few moments he recovered from his nervous excitement.

Frank saw that he was a middle-aged man of fine appearance, but most of his clothing was gone and his face was very pale.

The speed of the car had been slackened and the mustang dashed away, and soon disappeared from view.

"How came you to be tied to that animal's back?" asked Frank.

"It was done by Sancho Pedro's gang of bandits," replied the Mexican. "I fell into their hands while riding toward Mexico and they plundered me, and as they owed me a grudge for having had several of their number arrested, they sought revenge. Having tied me to the mustang's back they shot it in the flanks to madden it with pain and away it dashed with me. They expected it would go over a precipice with me, but it swerved when it reached the

edge and rushed over the mesa. The bandits then galloped off furious over the failure of their design."

"Sancho Pedro's gang!" echoed Frank, in surprise. "Do you mean the public letter writer of Truxillo?"

"Yes. Didn't you know he was the leader of a gang of bandits?"

"No," replied Frank. "That is news to me!"

"And so it was to everybody else, when the secret recently was exposed. It seems that he took advantage of his vocation as letter writer to learn people's secrets. When he thus discovered that any rich booty was in transit, he notified his gang, and they stole it."

"Are there many such scribes in this country?"

"Oh, yes—plenty. You see few of the people can read or write, and pay these men to do their correspondence."

"Was Sancho Pedro with the gang?"

"No; he left Mexico to go to the United States."

"Where does his gang flourish?"

"They have no regular stamping ground, but scourge the whole country from the Pacific slope to the Gulf of Mexico. Now, pray tell me, senior, what sort of contrivance this vehicle is?"

Frank satisfied his curiosity, and then asked:

"Where can we leave you now, sir?"

"Are you not going to the city?"

"Oh, no; our business takes us to the south."

"Then leave me at the first settlement you meet. When I get back to Mexico, I shall not fail to apprise the authorities how gallantly you saved my life."

Frank was pleased to hear this.

It would show the civil guard that they had made a serious error when they showed such hostility to our friends.

The Mexican then passed inside with Frank, and he told his friends what he learned from the man.

Everybody was astonished, of course, and Charley exclaimed:

"I'm afraid we are going to have more trouble than I expected to get the treasure of the ancient Mexicans."

"How do you mean?" asked Frank.

"Why, Sancho Pedro will doubtless get his gang together as soon as he lands, and the whole party will proceed to the mount where the gold lies. Should we encounter them there a fight will ensue."

"It is unfortunate," admitted Frank, "but we must try to get away with the gold before the villain can do as you suggest he may."

The Fox finally reached a small pueblo, and the rescued man earnestly thanked our friends and alighted.

She then continued her journey without him, and while Frank and Charley went on duty, Barney and Pomp prepared the breakfast.

The Irishman noticed that Pomp had a habit of reserving the best portions of the food for himself and commented on it:

"Faith it's a hog yez are entiorely, nagur!"

"Fo' de Lawd sake, wha' yo' mean, Barney?"

"It's ther best av ther meals ye kape fer yerself inshtid av givin' it ter me."

"Specs yo' wanter be de hog, doan' yo', chile?" grinned Pomp.

"Well, me teeth ain't aqual ter chawin' shoe leather, and if yez would kindly swap plates wid me, I'd be obliged."

"Say, honey, do yo' see any green in my eye?"

"Is it a refusal yez bes givin' me?"

"Dis chile know a good fing when he done got it."

Barney said no more, but he made up his mind that the darky would not have the dainty morsel all the time, and having secured a lot of pepper, he sprinkled it unseen over Pomp's food.

A few moments afterwards the meal was ready.

Charley was called in, and the three sat down to eat.

Pomp did not notice at first how his food had been doctored, but after taking several mouthfuls the pepper began to get in its fine work and made him feel as if he had been chewing hot coals.

"Golly!" he gasped, pulling a horrible face.

Then he glared at his food, saw the pepper, and sprang to his feet.

"Glory hallelujah!" he roared wildly. "Who done dat?"

"Shure the naygur has a fit!" grinned Barney.

"Sit down," said Charley in surprise. "What ails you?"

"Oh, Lawd! Sen' fo' de engines!" howled Pomp, dancing up and down and blowing furiously to cool his mouth. "I'se afire! Deed I is! Oh, such—gosh blame it! Who done dat? Who done dat!"

"What?" asked Barney innocently.

"Cober dat fodder wif pepper, sah," replied Pomp, and puff—puff—puff! he went again to ease the smarting.

"Howly floy!" chuckled Barney, gazing at the coon's big mouth.

"Shut that thrap! Bedad ther top av yer head may come off."

It began to dawn upon Pomp that Barney was the author of his misery, and he suddenly shrieked:

"Yo' done it! Yo' done it, kase yo' was jealous ob me habin' de bes' pieces! Gosh hang yo', Barney, I'se gwine ter knock de stuffins out ob yo' fo' dat. Clar de track! Heah come de bullgine!"

And lowering his head, the mad coon rushed at the jolly Irishman intending to butt him like a goat with a view to vengeance.

Barney though slipped out of his chair as quick as a flash as the darky charged on him.

The next moment Pomp's hard skull crashed violently against the table, the dishes, knives and forks flew up in the air, and there came a jingle, crash and bang as the glasses and crockery smashed on the floor.

Over went the food, splashing and flying in all directions, and a whoop of pain burst from Pomp's thick lips as myriads of stars snaped before his mental vision and he carromed back against the wall.

"Bull's eye!" yelled Barney, grinning with delight.

"Oh, my Lawd! I'se a dead niggah!" howled the coon.

"Confound you!" shouted Charley, as a plate of fried eggs and the contents of the coffee pot flew all over him. "What are you doing?"

The breakfast was a wreck.

"Doan' yo' speak ter me," groaned Pomp, as he rubbed his injured head. "Sen' fo' de doctah! Arrest dat Irish gorilla! Oh, my cocoa-nut—it am busted inter fo'ty-leben pieces, fo' suah!"

"Whin yez thry ag'in ter puck a hole in me neck wid yer top-knot, put a coal-scuttle on it," advised Barney, who was laughing so heartily at the coon's mishap, that the tears ran from his eyes.

And so saying he left the dining-room to relieve Frank, while the subdued coon got down on his hands and knees to clear up the wreckage.

By nightfall the Fox had left the good roads she had been running over, and was cutting across the cactus covered country, and got down among the rugged hills and mountains covering the interior.

The tropical moon rose, flooded the scene with its mellow light as the Fox ran into a great rugged mountain pass, and Frank bent over the switch board and turned one of the handles.

It threw a current into the electric fan-motors, and as they revolved with a buzzing sound, an agreeable draught began to circulate for the weather was exceedingly hot and sultry.

The young inventor was alone in the dome.

His companions were all seated back in the engine-room playing cards.

As the Fox ran further into the rocky pass, she was overshadowed on either side by great, towering mountains.

From without there came the sounds of thousands of insects, night-birds and lizards, and above it rose a purring yell of some wild beast, which was crouching in the adjacent bushes.

Frank turned on the search-light.

His blinding glare flashed far ahead, lighting up the way with the brilliancy of the sun, and the low, beastly growl was heard again.

As the machine grew nearer to the bushes, there suddenly sounded the crackling of twigs, and then a crash.

Out from the midst of the bushes leaped a huge dark form.

It was an enormous jaguar, and its lithe body clove the air like an arrow, and it landed on the turret window sill, directly in front of the young inventor.

There the savage beast hung, half in and half out of the pilot-house, its red mouth gaping and showing its awful fangs as it gave a horrible yell, and glared ferociously at Frank.

An exclamation of alarm escaped the inventor as he recoiled.

CHAPTER IV.

A SURPRISING REVELATION.

FRANK was exceedingly startled to see that horrible face looking through the open window at him.

The brute did not remain there more than an instant, for it had its hind legs braced on top the barrel of the pneumatic gun and gave another spring that launched its body at the inventor.

Frank had nothing but a hunting knife handy, and jerked it from his belt just as the jaguar struck him on the shoulders with its fore paws and knocked him against the wall.

In an upright position the jaguar was as tall as the young inventor, and as it clung to him its cat-like big head was brought in close contact with his face.

He felt its cruel claws pierce his flesh, and saw its red mouth opened wide as it turned its head sidewise as if to bury its long, sharp teeth in his throat and tear him to pieces.

A more savage foe he could scarcely have encountered.

Before the monster could bite him though, Frank plunged the keen knife in its body and a frightful shriek burst from the animal, its grip relaxed, and it fell to the floor, bleeding from a wound.

There was no one to guide the Fox now, and she rushed into the bushes from which the beast sprang, and stuck fast.

Such a shock ensued that Frank's friends were intensely alarmed, for they had heard the yells of the jaguar, and all hands now came rushing forward to see what happened.

When they reached the door, they found Frank on the floor.

He had lost his knife from a blow the jaguar dealt him, seized the animal by the throat and was trying to choke it.

The jaguar's four legs were moving furiously, and it scratched and dug Frank until his clothes were ribboned and his body and limbs were cut and bleeding.

Despite the furious efforts of the animal to release itself, the gallant inventor clung to its throat with the grip of a vise, and choked it till its tongue lolled out and its glaring eyes bulged.

A cry of astonishment and alarm escaped Frank's crew, and Barney drew a pistol from his pocket and rushed into the dome.

"How heavens!" he gasped, "it's thryin' ter ait him!"

And bang! went his pistol, the ball lodged in the jaguar's brain and in an instant the beast was dead.

Frank rose pantingly to his feet.

He was almost exhausted by the contest.

The grateful look he bestowed upon Barney amply evinced how glad he was the Irishman put such a sudden end to the fight, and as he hastily shut off the current of the dynamo, he exclaimed:

"I'm afraid he would have scratched all the flesh off my bones if you hadn't finished his career so suddenly, Barney."

"Where did ther baste come from?"

"Out of the clump of bushes we just ran into."

"Fo' de Lawd, dat's be biggest cat I ebber see!" Pomp asserted.

"You are pretty badly lacerated, Frank," said Charley, in anxious tones. "You had better attend to those wounds at once."

"Very well, Barney, see if you can't get that carcass out of the turret, and Pomp can back the Fox out of the bushes while I'm attending to my injuries. Come and help me, Charley."

Frank then left the turret, and as soon as the body of the jaguar was flung out the window, the coon got the Fox out of the bushes, and sent her on her course once more.

On the following morning the Fox reached a small village and paused there, as Frank wanted to purchase some oil for lubrication.

The electric car attracted a good deal of attention as she rolled through the narrow dirty streets, men, women and children flocking out of their houses to gaze at and run after the machine.

Upon reaching the main plaza, the Fox paused near a bodega and Frank being the linguist of the party alighted, and entered the store.

He found what he wanted in the grocery, and as he emerged with a jug of oil, he observed a large crowd of men coming out of a cafe next door to the bodega, where they had been drinking pulque.

They were the owners of a large number of saddled mustangs that stood in the street, rearing, kicking and plunging in fear of the Fox, and Frank was not favorably impressed with their hang dog faces.

It seemed to have angered these fellows because the Fox had frightened their ponies, and several of them pushed their way through the curious crowd that surrounded the car, and with scowling faces yelled at Barney, Pomp and Charley who stood in the turret:

"What right have you to bring that accursed machine into this pueblo and frighten our mustangs so they break their tethers?"

"Faix, I hope yer feelin' well, me buck," politely replied the Irishman, who did not understand a word of the Spanish addressed to him. "As for meself, I do be t'inkin' I have zher loikes av a bad lung."

"I have a mind to get into that car and put a knife in you!" yelled one of the Mexicans, angrily, as he shook his fist at Barney.

"Ah, how are ye, sport," affably grinned the Celt, waving his hand to the man. "Divil a bit do I know who yez are, but shure it's a trate ter see yez, I'm sure. I'd give yez a sup av whisky if I had it, me jewel."

"Fool! You speak as I cannot understand you," raved the man, who seemed to be the leader of the party. "But that is the way with those cursed Yankees. They are a vile race, and—"

"You lie!" exclaimed Frank, just then, in Spanish. "Don't you deride my countrymen! We had no intention of scaring your horses. My friends do not speak Spanish and therefore do not understand what you were saying."

The Mexican stared at Frank from head to foot! He was boiling with rage at the inventor's remark, and hissed:

"How dare you tell me I lie?"

"Simply because you did," coolly answered Frank.

"That is an insult, you dog!"

"It is a compliment to such a cur as you."

"By the demon, this is too much! I'll choke those words down your throat," shouted the man, and he made a rush for the inventor.

Frank did not flinch.

The moment the Mexican arrived in arm's reach, with the intention of choking the young American, he received a whack on the head from the oil jug that knocked him down.

The man had a score of friends with him, and every one of them became incensed against the daring inventor for punishing the man. Seeing the gang closing in around him, Frank moved toward the rear of the electric car and shouted:

"Stand back there, you rogues, or I'll serve you the same way!"

"Not if you get this between your ribs!" shouted one of them, brandishing a dagger, and it actuated the rest to draw their weapons.

In a moment more Frank found himself surrounded by a gleaming array of knives that had a decidedly ugly look.

The Mexicans were closing in around him fast.

He knew that the moment they met him more than one of those keen blades would be plunged into his body.

But his friends had seen what was occurring, and arming themselves with rifles, they aimed the weapons out the windows at the gang and made no hesitation about firing.

All three were dead shots, and three of the Mexicans fell wounded. The discharge of the weapons created a panic in the crowd.

All the villagers rushed away yelling and shrieking into their houses, and the gang menacing Frank fairly stumbled over each other in their desperate efforts to hasten out of range.

No sooner was the way clear, when Frank sprang aboard the Fox, hastened inside and closed all the windows.

Bang! Bang! came a volley of pistol shots from the crowd just as the shutters went down, and the bullets landed against the car and were shed to the ground harmlessly.

All the gang had hastily mounted their steeds.

Frank saw his companions in the turret preparing to fire again, and hastily shouted to them:

"No, no! Don't fire, boys!"

"But dey am shootin' at us, sah," said Pomp, resentfully.

"Never mind—their bullets can't touch us."

Just then one of the horsemen cried in Spanish:

"Oh, if we only had our captain here, how soon Sancho Pedro would put an end to those hounds!"

"Why, they are Sancho Pedro's gang of outlaws!" cried Frank.

His friends were equally as astonished as he was, when he told them what the Mexican had just said.

"There can be no doubt of it that they are the fellows who robbed the Mexican they tied to the horse's back," said Frank.

"Beheavens it's ignerent thim villagers bes av ther fact thim," said Barney, earnestly, "or they wouldn't be after treatin' thim wid respect."

"I'd like to see them jailed!" exclaimed Charley. "If they were thus put out of the way of doing us any harm, we could go on after the gold without fear of future molestation from them."

"Yassah!" said Pomp. "Let's go fo' dem!"

"Keep quiet a moment!" exclaimed Frank. "What's that yelling for? See—they are galloping away."

"Here he comes! Here he comes!" he heard the bandits yell.

Frank cast his glance along the street, and now saw a solitary horseman in the distance coming at a furious pace toward the gang.

He was a big Mexican in native sombrero, spurs and costume, and he was mounted upon a fine horse.

From where he was Frank could see that the man had a flowing black mustache and a dark, narrow face.

"Who can this fellow be?" he muttered.

"By thunder!" cried Charley, peering out, "it's Sancho Pedro!"

"What!" cried Frank in astonishment.

"Yes! The steamer from Boston must have made a fast passage and landed him in Mexico. He probably had an appointment to meet his gang here and came inland on horseback."

"The wretch!" cried Frank. "So he's the one who robbed us of the golden anklet, eh? Well, it won't do him any good if I can help it. Let's chase the rascal and get it away from him!"

The rest assented to this.

All the bandits had gone galloping out of the village at once, for Sancho Pedro knew as soon as he saw the Fox what she was and who rode aboard of her.

Away dashed the electric car at a rapid rate, and soon she left the village behind as she plunged after the galloping horsemen.

CHAPTER V.

TREED BY A BEAR.

The morning sun was blazing down hotly upon the open country as the Fox left the village behind and sped along a rough road in pursuit of Sancho Pedro and his twenty men.

It was evident to Charley Dunn that the rascal knew who was pursuing him and feared to pay the penalty of having stolen the golden anklet on which was the Aztec inscription.

Of course the man had by that time read the whole inscription and knew where the gold of Montezuma lay buried in the vault under the temple of the sun on the mountain.

Frank expected now to capture the man and prevent him from going after the buried treasure, but he was not prepared for the accident that was about to happen.

The electric car rapidly gained on the mustangs.

At a distance of a league from the village and just as the Fox was close at the heels of the horde though, the axle nut on the steering wheel worked loose, came off and the wheel fell.

Frank could no longer steer the machine.

He realized what happened though, by the way the wheel acted, and at once cut out the current, stopping the machine.

The bandits took advantage of this intervention, and lashing their mustangs, they sped ahead at a furious pace.

Frank alighted, and shouted to his companions:

"Come down here—quick! The steering wheel is off!"

"Och, murder!" gasped Barney. "Thim spalpeens will escape!"

"The accident couldn't have happened at a worse time!" cried Charley, as they alighted.

"Whar am de wheel?" asked Pomp, glaring around.

"It rolled into that cactus bush," replied Frank, pointing off to the left of the road, and hunting around for the nut.

The darky hastily recovered the wheel.

In the meantime Frank, Barney and Charley hunted for the nut.

Fully quarter of an hour passed by ere they found it, and by that time Sancho Pedro and his gang had gone into a dense chaparral and disappeared from view.

Tools were brought out from the store-room and the wheel was replaced.

As soon as the machine was in running order again all hands boarded her and Frank made her hum along the road again.

Upon reaching the chaparral, they observed that it consisted of a thicket of low evergreens and thick bramble bushes, entangled with thorny shrubs in clumps through which the bandits had left a trail.

The Fox was sent through a breach in the thicket, and crushing down the shrubs in her path she finally reached a stream.

Sancho Pedro's men had evidently sent their mustangs into the water course and reached the other side.

The water was too deep for the Fox to venture in, however, and Frank was reluctantly forced to abandon the pursuit.

"See—there's the tracks of the mustangs," said he, pointing out the window. "They run to the water's edge. Those villains have crossed the stream. You can see it's too deep for us to follow them."

"Faith, if there's no chance of a ruction," said Barney, "it's ahead we'd better be ather goin' ter raich ther mountain forninst thim."

This plan was followed.

Frank ran the Fox out of the chaparral.

She then resumed her course over the clear ground.

Nothing more was seen of the outlaws that day.

When night settled upon the scene, the Fox was a great many leagues from the place of her encounter with the bandits.

All around her towered huge mountains.

It was a wild, rugged region, in what the natives called the *tierras templadas*, or lands of temperate climate which comprised the higher terraces and plateaus of that region.

Here grew the plums, evergreens, mango, olive, orange, lemon, yucca, and an endless variety of cactus, one species forming hedges twenty feet high.

Among the sweet singing mocking birds were numerous bright-colored parrots, trogons and beautiful humming birds, while in the valleys and on the slopes were seen many bears, wolves, coyotes, bison, beaver and iguanas.

The reptiles were dangerous-looking, poisonous lizards, called heliodermis, huge scorpions, rattlesnakes and venomous tarantulas.

Frank and Charley finally turned in, leaving Barney and Pomp on duty, and while the coon held the wheel, the Celt amused himself by scraping a lively reel on his old fiddle.

"Whar am dat zem—biff—boom—bing—de—whack?" asked Pomp finally.

"Hey?" gasped Barney in astonishment, as he ceased playing.

"Dat mounting whar de gold am!"

"Oh, yez mane Zem—poom—zip—lal—tump—de—peck?"

"Specs dat's de name," said the darky, in dubious tones.

"Well, Masther Frank ses we'll raich it ter-morry."

"Do yo' know whar we am now, Barney?"

"I do. It's near Coixtlahuaca we're passin'."

"Oh, golly, wha' yo' call dat name?"

"Faith, an' I'll not repait it; me jure do be toired."

"I don't blame yo', honey," grinned Pomp. "De littler de towns am in dis yere country de bigger de names am. Say, Barney, my time's up, chile; yo' take the wheel."

"Faith, it's a joke I have on ye."

"What am it?"

"I'll not go on duty."

"Fo' de Lawd's sake—am I got ter do all de steerin'?"

"Ye have, me jewel. I'm on a stroike."

"But that am not fair, Barney."

"Divil a bit do I care."

An exasperated look swept over Pomp's dusky face, and he glared at Barney as if he would like to hit him.

"I doan' see whar de joke am," he remarked, dryly.

"No," assented Barney, with a broad grin. "Whin a man gits ketched he niver do. Faith I'm a daisy at jokin', d'yer moind?"

"Yassah," said Pomp, subduing a smile of satisfaction as he saw the Irishman lay his hands on the window sill, rest his chin on them, and stare out at the moonlit landscape. "Yo' am a cooler, Barney."

As he said this, he moved a plug cut out that threw a heavy current of electricity into the metal shell of the car, and gave Barney a terrible shock.

"Whoop!" yelled the Irishman.

He sprang from the chair upon which he sat, but he could not let go the window-sill, as the current contracted his muscles.

"Hooray!" roared Pomp, delightedly. "I'se got a joke on yo', Barney."

"Shtop ther bloody thing!" howled the Irishman, dancing around wildly, as the electricity flew through him in waves. "Howly jim-jams, d'yer moind what yez be's doin' wid me?"

"I'se on a strike, an' kain't stop it," chuckled Pomp.

"Oh, worra, but I'm a dead man!"

"Barney, when de joke am on yo', I spe's yo' kain't see it, kin yo'?"

"Lave off an' I'll howld ther wheel fer a week."

"Lord amassy, no. I wouldn't bodder yo' chile."

Barney groaned, pulled at the window-sill, made horrible faces, and squirming around, he roared:

"Send fer ther coroner!"

"Wha' fo'?" grinned Pomp.

"I want me measure tuck fer a coffin."

"G'way, honey, yo' am not gwine ter die!"

The yells, Barney uttered now were so wild that neither Frank or Charley could get asleep, and the coon discreetly cut out the current and ended Barney's woe ere they could come in and scold him.

"Now yo' gwine ter took de wheel?" asked the coon.

"Beheavens, I'm goin' ter puck yer in ther gobl!" roared Barney, and he doubled up his fist and made a rush for the coon.

There was only one way for Pomp to escape, and he let go the wheel and with one jump went out the window.

He landed on the ground, fell over, rolled several yards and finally came to a pause among the rocks.

"Bad cess ter ye!" yelled the angry Irishman out the window, "I will lave ye behoind fer that, d'yer moind!"

"Hull on dar!" roared Pomp, scrambling to his feet.

"I'll wait fer nuthin'" retorted Barney, and adding speed to the car, she swiftly dashed away from the coon.

Pomp rushed after her, but she outstripped him so fast he saw that it was impossible to overtake her and paused.

"Gosh amighty," he gasped, "am dat fool Irish crazy, or what am de mattah wif him, fo' leabin' me dis yere way?"

He watched the receding car a few moments, and then sat down upon the trunk of a fallen tree, muttering:

"Ain't gwine one step furdur. He done got ter come back an' pick me up if he go fo'ty seven miles. Finks he am awful smart doin' dat. By golly, I wisht I didn' stop de lectricity!"

Pomp glanced around.
He was in a wild lonely place.
From the midst of the bushes a big bear was striding, and the coon bounced to his feet when he saw it, and groaned.
"My lawd, looker dat!"
The bear saw Pomp and came toward him.
It sent a cold chill of alarm through the coon.
"Done gwine fo' ter chaw me up," he gasped. "I 'spect I better git away from heah jes' as soon's I kin."
With this reflection he dashed away.
Observing his signs of timidity, the big beast quickened its pace, and a sharp race ensued between them.
Pomp did not have a weapon.
That's what caused all his alarm.
He continued to run a short distance, but suddenly found himself confronted by one of the huge cactus hedges to which allusion has been made.
There he paused.
He could neither go ahead, nor to the right or left, and the bear was coming on in hot pursuit.
If he attempted to enter the hedge, the cactus needles would have lacerated his flesh frightfully.
The coon cast a hurried glance around.
A short distance off stood a large tree, and as it offered him a slight refuge he ran for it.
Up shinned the coon with the agility of a monkey, and he reached the branches just as the bear arrived at the foot of the tree.

CHAPTER VI.

A SINGULAR DEATH.

To Pomp's alarm the bear began to climb the tree in pursuit of him.
He did not expect such a move, and in his alarm he went out on a huge limb and gasped in husky tones:
"Bress my soul, if de ole snoozer ain't comin' up aftah me."
On came the hungry animal, exerting the most laborious efforts, until it finally reached the branch to which the darky clung, and uttering a low growl, it went out on the limb.
Pomp retreated to the extreme end.
His weight caused the branch to bend down.
"Come ahead, yo' sinnah," he exclaimed. "Dis chile out ob yo' reach now, I reckon—come on, dar!"
The bear needed no invitation.
It continued ahead toward Pomp.
Its added weight caused the branch to snap and crack with an ominous sound, and made it bend lower.
Upon observing that the bear had accepted his defiance, Pomp began to wish he had said nothing.
He pondered over the matter awhile, and then he muttered:
"I wondah if I could shake him off? I'se gwine ter try."
And so saying he began to swing the branches up and down.
First it swung very gently, but its violence increased every moment and the big beast began to totter.
"Hurrah!" roared Pomp when he observed that it was with the greatest difficulty the animal prevented itself from falling. "Dat's de only way! Golly looker him stagger!"
Up and down went the branch faster.
Then there came a violent—
Snap!
Then a sharp—
Crack!
Then a crackling—
Crash!
Then the branch broke and down went the coon and the bear into the cactus bushes like a pair of cannon balls.
"Oh!" yelled Pomp, wildly.
The next instant he was plunging into the bushes.
His body ripped the branches off, tore down the thick leathery leaves, and broke the big stems as if they were mere straws.
The bear landed on the ground close to the coon.
For an instant both Pomp and the animal were too confused to stir so sudden and great was the shock.
They finally recovered, however.
The first move made by the coon was to dive head-first out of the cactus into the clear space where the tree grew.
But the bear followed suit.
It had injured its paw by the fall, yet it came along at a moderately swift pace, more incensed than ever against the coon, and so furious that had he then fallen into its clutches the animal would have torn him to pieces.
Fortunately for Pomp, the Irishman relented, and coming back with the electric car, saw the danger he was in.
Seizing a rifle, Barney aimed at the bear and fired.
The ball penetrated the bear's head, just as the brute reached Pomp's heels, and over it fell dead.
"Erin go bragh!" yelled the Celt. "Arrah, but it's a holy terror I am entorely. D'yer moind ther fall I tuck out av him?"
"Bully fo' yo', Barney," replied Pomp, in grateful tones. "I'se gwine ter fo'gib yo' now fo' leabin' me behind."
"Git aboard, ye ace av spades! Faix I've lost too much time on yer already, so I have."
Pomp quickly mounted the Fox.
She then retraced her course.

Frank and Charley were apprised of what had happened, and when quietness was restored, the journey was resumed.

On the following day Mount Zempoaltepec was discerned.
It was an enormous mountain, standing 11,965 feet high in a spur of the Sierra Madre range, and as the electric car ran into the valley at its base, the crew saw that the mountain was densely wooded in some places, while in others frowning naked crags broke out from amid the verdure.

"There's your treasure mountain," said Frank to Charley, "but it's miles in extent, and it's a question now at what part of the hill we are to look for the ruin of the Temple of the Sun."

"A few miles further on," replied Charley, thoughtfully, "there's a village called Hidaigo, on the bank of the Teschoacan river at which we might make some inquiries."

"Living so near the mountain," said Frank, "surely some of the inhabitants ought to know where the ruined city of Pahuatlan lies. I'm going to try that plan."

The Fox soon reached the village.

It was similar in aspect to all Mexican settlements, the small adobe houses burnt to every color of the rainbow with their tiled roofs, big doors and windows and narrow, dirty streets.

As they drew near the place, the black eyed, dark skinned natives stared at the machine in amazement, and a crowd rushed out around the Fox, shouting all sorts of questions to her crew.

Frank stopped the machine.

"Have you an alcalde here?" he asked in Spanish.

"No, senor," replied an elderly Mexican, advancing, "but I am the judge, and was appointed a deputy by the Junta Superior del Gobierno."

"Will you kindly come aboard here so I can question you?"

"Certainly, sir," replied the old man, and he obeyed, with a shortness of breath that showed Frank he was not well.

As he passed into the vehicle, the crowd set up a clamor to be allowed to enter the car and view the interior.

Indeed, they swarmed upon her in their impetuous manner, and Frank felt the car tipping from the great weight on the rear platform, and rushed back, shouting:

"Get off there! Do you want to capsize the machine?"

"Let us in! We wish to see the machine!" yelled several.

"No! Get out! I don't want you! Get off the platform before you damage the engine!"

A shout of derision escaped the Mexicans, and they refused to go.

"Barney, get a rifle and frighten those inquisitive fools away."

"Begorra, I'll break their heads."

"No! Don't resort to violence—only scare them off."

The Celt nodded, got a rifle, and rushed at the crowd.

They took fright and soon cleared the platform.

While Barney was holding them off, Frank turned to the deputy.

"Do you know of the ruin of an ancient Aztec city on the mountain?" he asked. "I am anxious to locate the place."

"You mean Pahuatlan, no doubt, senor?"

"That's the place. Can you direct me to it?"

"Easily. But the city is no longer there. It fell hundreds of years ago from the effect of an earthquake shock, and then was half buried from an eruption of a volcano in the mountain."

"I know that," replied Frank. "Direct me."

"You will have to cross yonder *pedregal* of the *mal pais*."

He pointed at a distant field of lava beds, that the natives called "bad country," and Frank nodded and said:

"Well—which way then?"

"Further on you will reach a barranca—can you see it?"

He indicated a vast depression of the soil descending one thousand feet measuring several miles across, which was covered with a luxuriant vegetation of trees and shrubs, and was watered by small streams.

"Where will it lead us to?" asked Frank.

"The eastern side of the mountain. The Aztecs were like the Jews—they faced the rising sun. I know, for I am a Mestizo; my mother being a Spanish woman and my father a pure-blooded Aztec, which the degenerated race to-day miscall an Indian. However, by going up the eastern side of the mountain over half way to the top, the ruin can be found. But it is an extremely dangerous task."

"In what way?"

"There is a race of people on that mountain who yet retain the look, manners and customs of the ancient tribe of Anahuac. Beware of them, for they hate the white race and allow none to tread that mountain. The ancient ruin to which you refer is jealously guarded by that race as it was once the grandest place of worship among the ancient Aztecs. Why do you wish to go there?"

"To view the ruin," evasively replied Frank.

"I advise you to abandon your intention then."

"Oh, we can't do that. We will be quite safe in this machine."

"I have my misgivings about that. However, you—oh! I—"

A sudden paroxysm of pain seemed to seize the old Mexican, and he ceased speaking, and gaspingly fell back.

Frank caught him in his arms, preventing him from falling.

The Mexican had turned deathly pale.

"What is the matter with you?" demanded Frank, anxiously.

"Paralysis. I am—"

But he said no more.

His head fell back, and he gasped heavily, the death rattle sounded in his throat, and he became as limp as a rag.

Frank glared at his face.

"Dead!" he exclaimed in astonishment.

The old Mexican had evidently been a victim before of two paralytic

strokes, and had evidently died of the third, which had just attacked him.

Frank and his companions were startled and amazed.

"The man must have been a paralytic," he said to the rest.

"Yo' better git him out an' tell de gang," advised Pomp.

"Here—I'll help you to carry him," said Charley, seizing the man's legs.

They bore the corpse from the electric car and laid it upon the ground, and a wild yell escaped the crowd.

"They have killed the deputy!" shouted one of them.

"It was so we would not see them murder him that they would not let us into the vehicle!" yelled another.

Every one became intensely excited—an easy thing with that race.

"Gentlemen—" began Frank, wishing to explain.

But a wild furious yell from the crowd interrupted him.

"Kill the murderers!" screamed one of the men. "Kill them!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE EFFECT OF THE GUN.

The fierce cries of the enraged Mexicans clearly gave Frank and Charley to understand that the population of Hidalgo imagined that the crew of the electric car had murdered the deputy.

Despite all his protestations to the contrary, the young inventor knew he could not convince them of his innocence.

Moreover, he now saw that the vengeful instinct of the nation was asserting itself for many of them had drawn weapons.

The whole crowd surrounded Frank and Charley cutting off their retreat to the electric car.

As they rushed toward the inventor, he shouted in Spanish:

"Stop! We have done nothing wrong. He—"

"Down with him!" interrupted one of them.

"Stab him!" shouted another.

Seeing that argument was useless, Frank cried:

"Charge on them, Charley, with your fists."

They made a rush toward the crowd who interposed between them and the Fox, and struck out right and left.

Barney and Pomp shot into the crowd from the car windows.

For a moment the inventor and his companions saw scores of gleaming knives flashed around them, and barely escaped being stabbed to death by exercising the utmost agility.

They did not escape unhurt, though.

Several of the knives inflicted cuts that, though slight, were nevertheless painful in the extreme.

Bang! bang! went the rifles in the hands of the coon and the Irishman, and several of the Mexicans fell wounded.

Biff! whack! went the fists of the gallant young inventor and his companion, and every man who received a blow had occasion to regret it.

So furiously impetuous was the rush of the two that they fought open a passage to the Fox.

Hastily boarding her, they dashed inside, just as those of the Mexicans who had revolvers shot at them.

Escaping the bullets, they closed the shutters.

"Safe so far," panted Frank.

"Look out whin ye enthers ther dome," warned Barney.

"Keep on firing, and I'll get her going."

"Glory Hallelujah!" roared Pomp. "Git a gun, Charley."

Crack—bang! went the shots through the loopholes, and down went two more of the furious, unreasonable Mexicans.

Frank rushed forward.

To hide himself he got on his hands and knees.

He thus got into the dome without being seen, although the windows were wide open, and crept forward to close the shutters.

Before he could cross the turret though, several of the Mexicans climbed up on the front of the car, and peered in.

They saw him.

Several pistols were aimed at him.

Frank was now armed with a brace of revolvers though.

He was a dead shot, and as quick as lightning in his movements, and ere the natives could fire he sent such a volley flying at their heads that those who did not fall from being wounded dropped to the ground glad to escape with their lives.

Bang! went the blinds shut the next moment.

Not until then was Frank absolutely safe.

He loaded the pneumatic gun.

The mob outside were a desperate, bloodthirsty crowd, and he lost all patience with them.

They were then shooting at and stoning the Fox, and Frank resolved to put an end to their hostilities.

He therefore aimed the gun and fired a projectile so that it struck the ground a short distance from them.

It burst with a report like thunder.

Tons of earth, stone and debris were blown toward the Mexicans, but the shell spent its dangerous fragments in the ground.

He only designed to scare them, and he succeeded well.

The cloud of dirt flew all over them, the stones pelted them and the awful report gave them a terrible fright.

A wild chorus of shouts arose.

Then a great stampede followed.

Off they ran in all directions expecting to be killed.

Frank laughed, and drove the Fox in the opposite direction.

"Stop firing, boys!" he shouted. "They have had enough!"

A laughing chorus responded.

The undignified retreat, and terror of the Mexicans was comical after the bloodthirsty actions they had been assuming.

Barney now entered the turret, opened the shutters, and said:

"Faith, they're a cowardly lot."

"I've got well rid of them," Frank answered.

"Lave me howld ther wheel. Sure you an' Charley is that gashed up be ther knives av the spalpeens, sure yez looks like hash."

Frank was only too glad to resign the wheel.

He and Charley then doctored their injuries.

The Fox cut across the lava beds, and passed down into the big depression to reach the eastern side of the mountains.

It was nearly midday before she gained the place she sought.

There was only one place at which she could ascend, and that was a succession of terraces, overgrown in places by different kinds of trees, the bald rock cropping out here and there from the soil.

Frank caught view of the almost obliterated ruins of what had once been a flight of stone stairs leading up the slope of one of these terraces, and upon a closer examination, he said:

"This is the place. See—there are the remains of what must once have been a means of ascent for the ancient dwellers of this place. Consequently this clear slope may lead us directly to the very place we are searching for."

"Is the Fox capable of making all the ascents?" asked Charley.

"Oh, yes. They are steep in places. But then it looks as if in by-gone ages they had been steeper. A flow of molten lava down the mountain side would be apt to level the terraces as much as they now are. The fact of some such peculiarity having occurred here is shown by the absence of many trees and smoothness of the ascent."

"Dis chile'gree wif yo' perzackly," said Pomp. "Let's try it, honey."

Frank then turned the electric car up the slope.

She had all her current working the motors, but made very slow progress up to the top of the first ascent.

Frank managed her.

He had to pick her course.

In certain places it was too steep to be mounted.

She went up again, however, and finally reached the first small belt of timber growing in her course.

But she had scarcely reached it when the young inventor gave a start, and turning her aside, put on full speed and cut diagonally across the plateau she stood upon.

At the same time the rest heard a deep, rumbling noise.

"What's up?" demanded Barney, gripping a rifle.

"Death stares us in the face!" muttered Frank.

"My Lawd! wha' yo' call dat rumble?"

"Bowlders shooting down toward us."

"Heavens!" gasped Charley.

Every one now looked out the windows.

They saw a dozen or more mighty rocks, none of which could have weighed less than a ton come flying down the slope.

As they sped down the mountain side with a rumbling roar, they knocked up the dirt in showers.

Meeting obstructions they would suddenly bound up into the air and coming down again, dig a long gash in the ground.

Frank had turned the machine to get out of their way.

As the Fox darted along under a slight elevation, the foremost rock struck the edge of the eminence.

Every one held his breath with suspense.

None expected the rock could miss crashing against the Fox and smash her to pieces.

But the bowlder flew up in the air, and shooting clear over the car, landed on the other side of her with a bang and went on rolling down the steep declivity.

Before the rest of the rocks could follow the first one so closely to the car, Frank had run her among the trees hedging the open space.

There she paused in comparative safety.

"Where did thim pebbles came from?" gasped Barney.

No one ventured to reply, as they did not know, but Frank suggested.

"They didn't come down voluntarily."

"Jes' when we was gwine up too," added Pomp.

"It's a queer mystery," said Charley. "Are you going up?"

"As soon as the downfall ceases," replied Frank firmly.

The rest of the bowlders went thundering by, and when the last one had disappeared at the foot of the mountain, Frank ran the Fox out into the clearing and started her up again.

She began to ascend another terrace.

In the meantime Frank keenly scanned the heights ahead, but failed to observe the cause of the rocky downfall.

He was very much perplexed over the matter.

There were no more rocks falling.

"Perhaps," said he, "those bowlders became detached from up in the mountain and rolled down in consequence of a shaking of the ground. Ordinarily I would have thought some one had hurled them, or rather, started them rolling down for the object of crushing the Fox. Yet there is no evidence to bear out this idea."

They reached the next plateau.

Here the clearing was narrow, the sides being bordered by rocks and trees and an endless variety of bushes.

She had no sooner reached the summit when out from their concealment behind the stones and vegetation swarmed a veritable army of savages, and Frank stopped the car.

With a rush they reached the Fox.

A large number of them caught hold of her.

Then, to the astonishment of every one, they dragged, pushed, and pulled her to the edge of the terrace and shoved her off. In a moment more, and ere Frank could prevent it, she was flying down the steep declivity at an appalling speed.

CHAPTER VIII.

BURSTING THE DAM.

The fear filled Frank's mind that the electric car would capsize during that fearful plunge down the hill.

He dared not apply the brake, for that would be sure to trip her, but he got a grip on the wheel, and when the Fox reached the first plateau below, he turned her.

Around she spun, deviated from her course, and rushed along the edge of the plateau, digging up the dirt with her wheels.

Fortunately she did not go down the second declivity but dashed ahead toward the trees, the inventor now applying the brake.

Just as she reached the trees Frank stopped her.

A shout from the natives now reached his ears, and glancing up, he saw hundreds of them swarming over the terraces.

"They must be the tribe of Aztecs the Mexican spoke of," muttered the inventor, "and they evidently mean to repulse our attempt to ascend the mountain. There are hundreds of them, too."

"Be heavens, their brown spalpeens handled us wid aise," said Barney, "an' if we gets ter ther tip av ther mountain, it will only be fighitin' every shtep av ther way."

"They are only armed with primitive weapons," observed Charley, "and their clubs, spears, and arrows can't do us much harm."

"Gwine ter go up dar again, Massa Frank?" asked Pomp.

"Yes—you take the wheel and I'll clear the path with the gun."

The coon assumed control.

Frank then got his weapon ready.

When the mountaineers saw the Fox returning they gave a yell, and brandishing their weapons they rushed to and fro.

It was evident that they expected to repulse the car again.

"I'll take a little of the spunk out of them in a few minutes,"

Frank muttered, in grim tones.

"Look out for more rocks," cautioned Charley. "It must have been those villains who sent down the avalanche at us."

"Arrah, but it wor a mystery ter me," said Barney. "Dhrop about tree thousand av thim, Masther Frank, dear, an' place me among ther rest wid me shillelah. Shure, I'm crazy ter git a welt at their heads, bad cesser ter their blackguards."

Up the slope went the machine, and a shower of spears were hurled at her by the savages, dozens of the shafts striking the Fox.

Some of them broke against the machine, others bounced off, and many missed her, but, of course, no damage was done.

As she continued to ascend, the shouting became louder.

Then the twang of bow strings was heard, and down came a volley of arrows, none of which did any more harm than the spears.

By this time Frank had the gun ready.

He saw that the sternest measures were necessary.

These savages were thirsting for the lives of the car's crew.

In order to win their respect it was necessary to show the awful power of the gun, and teach them a severe lesson.

Frank let the projectile fly in their midst.

Boom! it roared.

The deadly fragments scattered everywhere.

A score of the savage bit the dust.

The rest were paralyzed with astonishment.

As soon as they recovered they scattered and ran.

"That settles them!" said Frank grimly.

"Dey am in no humor fo' mo'," grinned Pomp.

"There they go among the trees!" said Charley, watching them.

"Now, bedad, it's no interference we'll get," Barney chuckled.

"I don't agree with you," said Frank earnestly. "The superstition of these people will overcome their alarm of us. I expect them to still contest our advance most bitterly."

Forcing her way upward, the Fox passed the place where the natives had been gathered.

Reaching the last terrace, she ran out upon a level that extended ahead a great distance.

From the extremity the mountain rose in rough, rocky ascents, split by canyons and gorges, and rent by water courses.

The place was alive with game and an abundance of fruit, so that it proved a fine location for the Aztecs to live in, as they depended entirely upon hunting and trapping for their support.

Frank then saw the canyon ahead that led to the upper ground and ordered Pomp to run the machine into it.

"We must take advantage of their panic to get as far up as we can," he exclaimed. "We will soon enough have them buzzing about our ears again. Hurry her along, Pomp."

"Am yo' gwine right straight inter dat yere canyon, sah?"

"Yes, for it seems to be the only opening that leads to the height beyond," replied Frank, as he scanned the rocks.

"There's the brown nagurs," said Barney, pointing back.

The Aztecs had come from their coverts.

All were now intently watching the machine.

One tall, majestic fellow who seemed to be the chief, was seen to gather a number of them around him and speak to them.

They then dashed into the bushes and vanished.

"Did you see that, Frank?" asked Charley.

"Yes. The chief evidently gave them instructions to do something and they have run away to execute his orders."

"Very likely then we will hear from them ahead."

"That's just what I anticipate."

"Heah am de canyon, Massa Frank."

"Run her up, Pomp."

"Faix, there's a wall ahead," said Barney.

"So there is—it looks like a pile of logs, dirt and stone," Frank remarked, as he scrutinized an elevation that crossed the other end of the canyon high up in the mountain from over which poured a tiny stream that ran down to the canyon.

He leveled a telescope at it.

On each side was a sloping footpath that ran from the canyon up to the top of the fall, but it was too narrow for the Fox to mount.

She continued on toward it a short distance, when Pomp said:

"Kain't git up dar, nohow."

"Stop her, and turn around," replied the inventor.

"What am de nex' move?"

"We'll have to run back and find another way to get up."

"Beheavens, there goes thim yaller coons now!" cried the Celt.

He pointed at the top of the cliffs on each side.

There ran the men the chief had been speaking to.

In a moment more they disappeared.

Just as Pomp attempted to turn the machine the dynamo spring ran down, and the mechanism came to a full stop.

Frank quickly ascertained what happened.

As he opened a trap door in the floor, he sung out:

"It's the spring has run down. I'll wind it up again."

To do this would occupy fully five minutes, for it was an enormous spring, and had to be wound by means of a crank.

While the inventor was attending to it, Charley exclaimed:

"The Aztecs have reached the elevation ahead."

"What are they up to?" queried the inventor.

"I can't make out without a glass, but they're working there."

Pomp had the telescope.

He now gave an exclamation of alarm.

"Golly, dey am knockin' away de logs an'—"

Boom! came a sullen roar, interrupting him.

Then a most thrilling scene was witnessed.

All now saw that the logs facing the elevation had been forming a dam, and having been weakened by the natives, the whole thing was giving away with a gurgling roar and a crashing of timbers.

Out spurted the confined water.

Then the whole dam gave away.

Several of the Aztecs failed to get out of the way in time, and were caught by the flood and hurled along.

Toward the Fox rushed the flood.

It was appalling.

As the Fox stood directly in its way, and could not run on account of the spring having given out, she stood an excellent chance of being deluged and perhaps destroyed.

All her inmates observed their peril.

Frank did not stop working at the spring.

But before it was of any avail the roaring, boiling, and seething mass of water struck the electric car and flew up over her.

"Out with you and swim!" shrieked Frank.

He realized that the Fox was buried.

The force of the current was hurling her along.

If they remained inside they would drown like rats in a trap.

Even then the water was pouring into her fast, and she was reeling as if about to go over at any instant.

All rushed for the windows.

It was a desperate fight to get out.

The last one had scarcely hurled himself from the machine when she was tipped over, fell on her side, and swept along with the current.

All hands could swim.

Frank found himself engulfed.

He strove to reach the foamy surface.

The water was rushing forward with a strong impulse.

In places it whirled and eddied, in other places it leaped in frothy breakers over the rocks impeding its way, and the awful onward rush carried everything before it.

Frank reached the top and glanced around.

The surface was littered with floating logs, bushes and rubbish.

Barney was swimming, Pomp was clinging to one of the logs, and Charley was hanging on to a sapling near the cliff when a log came along, dealt him a terrible blow, and he sunk.

"He's gone!" groaned Frank.

Just then he reached the entrance of the canyon.

Here the waters burst out with a loud hissing rumble, spread over the plateau and lost its force.

Frank was shot forward like a cannon ball.

Down he plunged a moment afterward.

His head came in violent contact with a log and stunned him.

His senses fled, and he sunk in the water like a corpse, and it seemed as if he must drown in that condition.

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE AZTEC TOWN.

It was, perhaps, the flow of the cool water lavng Frank's head that revived him a short time afterwards.

He suddenly realized that he lay among a collection of logs, his head and shoulders upon one of them, and the water almost over his face, so that the slightest move might have drowned him.

His head throbbed painfully as he sat up.

Then he heard the report of a weapon, and glancing in the direction from whence it came, he saw Barney and Pomp.

Both stood beside the overturned electric car up to their knees in water, and were firing at a party of Aztecs who had been rushing up the slope towards them.

Charley was nowhere in sight.

The shots repulsed the natives and they retreated.

Frank lay midway between the Aztecs and his friends.

As he staggered to his feet, the mountain men saw him.

This they manifested by a chorus of shouts.

Then they ran toward him.

"Barney!" he shouted.

His friends heard him.

"Run!" yelled the Celt.

Bang! Bang! came two more shots.

Down went two more of the Aztecs.

That drove them back.

But they sent a shower of arrows whizzing after Frank, and they flew so close to him the wonder was he escaped uninjured.

He could only account for it by reflecting that the natives were unable to take accurate aim while running.

Bang! Bang! followed a couple of rifle shots to cover his retreat and stop the flight of the arrows.

Frank ran as fast as possible through the shallow water and reaching his friends, he panted:

"Where's Charley?"

"Sorra a bit do I know," Barney replied.

"Were either of you hurt?"

"Berry little, Massa Frank," replied the darky.

"And the electric car?"

"Begorry she's been rowled like a football, but she's that shtrong it wud take a batthery av mountain howitzers ter destr'y her."

"We'll have to get her upon her wheels now."

"Yo' git de tackle," said Pomp to Barney. "I guard yer, chillen." The Irishman complied.

By means of the ropes, he and Frank hauled the Fox upright.

Her contents were scattered and drenched, and many things were broken, but she was in good traveling condition, despite the rough handling the stream had given her.

All got aboard and tried to put her in order.

"I'll run up in the canyon with her, and recover Charley's body," said Frank when they rearranged the interior.

"His body?" echoed Barney in alarm.

"Yes. I saw him sink after a log hit him on the head."

"Oh, fo' de Lawd—am he drowned?"

"I'm afraid so, Pomp."

Frank started the current and the car ran ahead.

She did not proceed very fast, however.

Into the canyon she rolled, and every one kept a lookout for the corpse of Charley, but failed to find it.

They scoured the place from end to end.

Long before they finished the water had almost ceased flowing through the broken dam.

Only a small stream remained, and such water as had been flooding the bottom of the canyon flowed all away.

Although the bed of the canyon was then exposed, the body of the unfortunate Charley was not seen.

Near the exit from the place they found his hat.

Concluding that he had been washed out upon the big plateau they searched that place, too.

No better success attended their efforts.

He had completely disappeared!

"The Aztecs may have found his body," commented Frank at last, "and perhaps carried it away."

"Jist what I do be tinkin'," coincided Barney.

"What kin dey do wif de dead corpse?" asked Pomp.

"Burn it on one of their altars as a sacrifice to the sun."

"Where d'yer s'pose thim spalpeens howld out?"

"These Aztecs are house dwellers, and are of a certain amount of civilization in their own way," replied Frank. "They have their laws, they worship their gods in grand temples, they compute time, and make pottery. Such people have villages. These people must, therefore, have a fixed settlement somewhere up on this mountain. If I knew where to look for it, I would go there and try to wrest Charley's body from them to save it from being burnt. Still, after all, they may not have it."

"Whar am it den?"

No one could imagine.

Barney finally said:

"Ther wather what kem down on us must have been a lake impounded be ther dam—don't yer think so?"

"Yes," answered Frank. "That must have been it. Now let us have one more look for the missing man, and if we can't find him I'm going up higher."

The search began.

Not a place was left unseen where poor Charley's body could have lodged, and they were finally forced to give up.

By that time the gloom of night fell.

The machine was rapidly drying out.

None of the food was spoiled as it was in water-tight receptacles, and they therefore managed to get their supper.

All the water had been lost.

There was plenty in the stream though.

At the conclusion of the meal Frank and his friends entered the

turret, and the young inventor pointed at a large opening among the trees near the canyon and said:

"Let's try that place, and see if it will lead us up higher."

"Sure I saw a lot av thim Aztec fellers roon up there," said Barney.

"Pomp, you go on the lookout at the window."

"Yassah," said the coon, and the car went on.

It was utterly useless to waste any more time there looking for Charley, for he was not there.

It made them all feel bad to think he had perished so miserably, every one in the party had run the same amount of risk he did.

The machine went among the trees.

There a very steep hill was encountered.

The car slowly mounted it, however, and as she neared the top, the darky caught view of a number of shadowy forms swarming like monkeys in the trees on each side of the machine.

"Dar am de Injuns!" he exclaimed.

"What in the world can they be doing in the trees?"

"Begorry it's moonkeys they are," laughed Barney.

Just then a volley of spears and arrows flew at the car.

It showed them that the men had formed a peculiar ambush, and expected their weapons would make great execution.

Indeed, the fusillade nearly cost Pomp his life.

The shutters of the window were wide open, and several of the darts had shot into the dome in close proximity of the coon.

He gave a startled cry and hastily closed the shutters.

They paid no further heed to the darts after that, and the Fox presently reached the cliffs above the canyon.

The moon had risen.

Its silvery rays slanted down on the mountain side.

Frank now caught view of a huge crimson glow ahead through the trees up from which many sparks flew.

The roaring, crackling blaze proceeded from a big fire, and as an inkling of the truth dawned upon the inventor's mind, he put on speed and made the Fox rush rapidly toward it.

She soon burst from the woods.

Ahead was a village of small stone houses.

From the center of the settlement rose a small hill upon which was perched a large, peculiar looking building.

From this place came the strange notes of a horn and the chanting of many voices, while the fire on a square stone altar before the portals of the building, was surrounded by men.

Around the base of the hill, looking up at the ceremony going on at the crest of the elevation, were a large number of men, women and children of the Aztec race.

Ever and anon the deep, dull clang of a big gong pealed out.

Just as Frank saw them a procession of men garbed in the robes of Aztec priests issued from the temple.

At their head marched a man with his hands bound behind him.

"By heavens! there's Charley now!" cried Frank, pointing at the prisoner.

The priests made him kneel before the altar.

A chorus of shouts rose from the spectators.

One of the priests drew a dagger from his girdle and sprang toward the kneeling man.

His murderous intention was obvious.

As quick as a flash Frank aimed a rifle at him and fired.

The ball struck the priest, he uttered a shriek of mortal agony and flinging up his hands he fell prostrate.

"Barney, load and fire the pneumatic gun at them!"

"I will that! We'll save the poor lad yet!"

"Pomp, take this rifle and fire at the priests!"

A fearful commotion had taken place when Charley's appointed executioner fell dead.

The rabble set up a fierce shouting.

As Pomp sent more shots up at the priests they scattered.

The projectile shot from the gun landed on the hill and a panic followed that beggars description.

Ahead rushed the electric car.

She dashed through the village and reaching the base of the temple hill, she sped among the frightened Aztecs and went flying toward the top to the rescue of Charley Dunn.

CHAPTER X.

THE CAVE-IN.

It was remarkable with what speed the electric car reached the summit of the hill, and dashed toward Charley.

Several of the priests had made an effort to bury their knives in his body after the first one fell, but the dead shot darky dropped them with his rifle as fast as they appeared.

Finally they all rushed into the temple.

"Stop her here, Frank!" cried the Celt. "I'll be after goin' out—"

"No! I'll attend to Charley. You fire the gun at the village."

"Golly—he am runnin' dis way," chuckled Pomp.

"Frank! Frank!" shouted the prisoner.

Open went the rear door and out jumped the inventor armed with a knife, and as soon as he met Charley he cut his bonds.

"Thank Heaven, you are safe!"

"Did you give me up for dead, Frank?"

"Yes. I thought you were drowned."

"Oh, no. A log struck me, but I only sunk for a minute, and when I rose the current carried me out of the canyon right into the hands of a crowd of these blackguards."

"Into the car with you."

They quickly got under shelter.

Pomp then started the Fox down the hill.

"Where have they been keeping you?" asked Frank.

"In the temple on the hill. It was a gloomy dungeon. They were going to roast me in that fire when you appeared."

Frank explained how they searched for him.

By the time he finished the machine reached the foot of the hill and dashed away, leaving the village behind.

A crowd of the Aztecs came running after the car, but the gun was reloaded, the Fox swung around, and Barney let a shot fly in their midst that mowed down a score of them.

That put the rest to flight.

"There's a path; it looks a good deal like a wagon road," said Frank as he entered the turret and grasped the wheel. "I'll pursue it and see where it will lead us as it ascends the slope."

They were gradually fighting their way up the mountain side and running a dangerous gauntlet, and expected to have an equally as dangerous time coming down.

It was evident that the Aztecs were bitterly opposed to them.

Frank was fully determined though to fight his way to the place he was in search of, and find out if any of Montezuma's gold was really hidden there as the golden anklet stated.

None of the Aztecs now followed them.

The path ran through the trees, over the stoniest of ground, across lava beds, and up the steepest ascents.

When they finally reached a point not far from the extreme summit of the mountain, they saw a level plateau upon which grew the densest trees and shrubs.

It was very dark and gloomy here, and the air was much cooler than it had been down in the valley.

The search-light was started.

As its glare shot among the trees Frank suddenly cried:

"There's a ruin!"

Every one looked and saw what had once been a huge building standing among the trees.

Only a small portion of the pillars and walls remained, and trees and shrubs were growing in what had once been the interior of the building.

Around it portions of other buildings were seen.

Some were covered with lava, and others formed ridges beneath the soil, while the crumbling remains of but very few yet stood where they originally were built.

"Arrah, this must be ther place!" said Barney.

"Fo' shuah it am," assented Pomp.

Frank and Charley agreed with them.

A suitable opening between the trees was found, and the young inventor drove the Fox into it.

She finally stopped in the big building, for this, if any, must have been the temple of the sun.

Here Frank alighted and made an examination of the ground.

He found that it was covered with lava, and reflected that if there was a vault beneath this flinty substance containing the gold, it would be one of the most difficult places to reach.

Returning aboard the Fox, he told his friends the result.

"How we are to break through that thick crust," he said, "I do not know. I doubt if we could blow it open with the gun."

"But we've got ter see what's undah it," said Pomp.

"Yes, that's what we came here for."

"Shure, it's a big buildin', this," said Barney, "an' as we don't know at all, at all where ther loikes av ther vault do be situated, we'd have ter probe ther hull place. That would be a purty tough job!"

"Perhaps we may devise a plan," said Frank. "To-night we can do no more. We are all tired out. Let's take a rest."

Soon afterward a watch was posted and three turned in.

The following day dawned clear and sunny.

Charley had been on guard last.

He aroused his companions and said:

"The Aztecs surround us by the hundreds."

"Have they attempt any violence?" asked Frank, hurriedly.

"No. They are merely lurking in the woods watching us."

Frank rose, dressed, and saw them.

They kept at a respectful distance.

The pneumatic gun had given them a wholesome dread of the Fox, and yet they were so jealous of the trespassing of the crew of the car upon the mountain that they could not keep away from her.

Pomp cooked breakfast.

As soon as it was eaten, Frank sent the car rolling around the temple to give his companions a view of the place.

The sun was now streaming down through the trees, and its rays dispelled the dense gloom that had been prevailing.

Grass, weeds, bushes and trees carpeted the ruin, but here and there the lava cropped up through it, showing that the under strata was probably all of this stone.

"It's a great many years since this place was overwhelmed," said Frank. "See what thick trunks the trees have that grow here. It shows they are very old."

"Faith, why don't yer dhrop a shot at ther ground?" asked Barney, "it moight crack it open! Try wan shot, Masther Frank!"

"I shall if only to test it," replied the inventor.

He stopped the Fox close to the wall.

Loading the gun, he aimed at the ground in the middle of the space and discharged it, the shell bursting with a deafening sound.

A mass of rock, dirt, and weeds flew up in the air.

There were scarcely prepared for what followed.

It seemed as if the earth were caving in.

The entire space inclosed within the wall caved in.

Down it went, splitting into thousands of fragments.

The Fox went down with it.

A cloud of dust flew high in the air.

Every one in the electric car was violently thrown down and it seemed to them as if they were plunging into a bottomless pit.

But they did not go down far before they landed with a heavy shock, and found that they were no more than twenty feet from the top.

All hands were considerably bruised and shaken up by the fall, and imagined the car had suffered demolition.

Frank was the first to recover his wits.

He sprang to his feet and found that the Fox was lying half buried amid the debris, tilted over slightly on one side.

Then he glanced out the window.

He observed that there must have been a large vault or cellar under the temple, which had been covered by a crust of lava.

From old age the lava had evidently become cracked and weakened to a great extent so that the shock of the shot had caused it to break and fall with them.

His comrade soon noticed the situation.

An excited discussion of the matter followed, and Barney finally asked in despairing tones:

"How are we ter git out av this hole?"

"Oh, a means can be devised later," Frank answered.

"But gosh a'mighty, yo' amn't gwine fo' ter stay heab, is yo'?"

"For a short time, Pomp."

"What object have you in view?"

"Can't you see, Charley? We came here looking for a vault under the ruin, and this is pretty strong evidence that one existed. Now if the gold is here, we ought to find it."

"Faix, it's the level head yez has entoiely," said Barney.

A plan of action was formed at once.

Barney and Pomp armed themselves, and climbed up out of the hole to guard against the approach of the Aztecs whom the gun shot had frightened away, and Frank and Charley searched the ruin.

There were tons of the debris caved in.

"If we have to remove all this stuff," said the inventor, as they went along, "it would scarcely pay to look for the stuff."

"That's a fact," replied Charley, soberly. "And I can't see where else it can be except beneath this rubbish."

"Hold on a moment—"

"What's the matter?"

"I see a door in the side wall over there."

"Ah, yes! I wonder where it leads to?"

"Let us see!"

The door in question was fixed in the masonry at one side of the huge vault, and was of a peculiar pattern and made of stone.

It swung on a pivot instead of hinges.

They hastened over to it.

It required the united exertions of both to move it.

Finally, however, they caused it to swing around when a dark vaulted passage was revealed ahead.

The young inventor and his companion boldly entered it.

Pursuing the passage a short distance, it finally led them into a small room as dark as pitch.

Frank ignited a match and held it up.

CHAPTER XI.

FINDING THE TREASURE.

THE tiny flame showed Frank and Charley that they were in a square apartment, the ceiling and walls of which were festooned with cobwebs, while the floor was covered with dust.

Stacked against the back was a pile of dusty rubbish.

The young inventor lit another match and approached it.

He kicked the mass and it gave out a cloud of dust that nearly blinded them and made them sneeze and cough.

When it settled down Frank saw that the stuff was the remains of what had once been a number of heavy boxes.

Dry rot and the eating of worms and insects had reduced them to mere heaps of dust.

Mingled with the remains were heavy lumps of discolored metal.

"Gold!" said Frank, picking up one of them.

"Is it the treasure?" gasped Charley, in startled tones.

"Yes," was the quiet reply, for Frank was not excited, although Charley was, and he showed the ingot to his companion.

There was no doubt of it now.

It certainly was the treasure they sought for.

The emperor's golden anklet had told the truth.

Each of them took an ingot to show Barney and Pomp.

They then left the chamber.

"There's enough of it to make a heavy load for the Fox," said Frank as they left the subterranean chamber.

"Provided we can get her out of that hole," said Charley.

Just as they emerged from the passage they heard several rapid shots and saw the coon and the Celt jump down in the cellar and rush for the Fox.

"Get aboard!" yelled the Irishman to Frank.

"What's the matter now?"

"Sure there's millions av thim Aztecs comin'!"

"A few less than that," laughed Frank.

He saw the mountaineers swarming into the ruined temple by the hundreds on all sides.

The inventor and his companion hastened aboard the car.

"What is it—a concerted attack?" asked Charley.

"S'pecks it am," panted the dorky. "Ebery one ob dem am rushin' dis way. As we couldn't keep 'em back bery easy, we runned."

"There certainly is a large force," commented Frank.

"Begorra, they're joompin' down here!" Barney exclaimed.

"Get your weapons!" cried Frank. "I'll do the best I can with the gun. The chiefs must have gathered their entire tribe here for this attack. There's going to be a hot time, boys!"

The doors and windows were secured.

Many missiles were fired by the Aztecs, as they surrounded the ruin and came pouring down into the depression.

In a few moments the rifles of the inmates were blazing away and the pneumatic gun was sweeping the ground ahead and to the right and left.

A perfect bedlam reigned for awhile.

As the big gun could not be revolved more than in a semi-circle Frank could only command half the place.

His companions wielded their small arms so effectively though that they kept the rear section cleared.

The Aztecs withstood the fire gallantly.

Many of them went down, but there were scores to take the places of the fallen warriors instantly.

Indeed, many of them reached the Fox.

They seemed to be determined to overcome Frank's crew.

It occurred to them, as they had once before handled the Fox, that they could cripple her inmates by throwing the car over.

With this intention in view, many of them flung the stones aside that bound her wheels holding her where she stood.

The moment she was released of the vise-like grip of the debris, fully fifty of them seized her.

But just then Frank electrified the hull.

Horrified by the momentary shock they screamed, and releasing her they dashed away, ignorant of the cause.

They now had a dread of the car.

"Fools!" muttered Frank. "Instead of injuring us as they designed, they have merely succeeded in liberating us from an unpleasant predicament. Now we can manage the Fox and drive them out."

He called Barney and told him to operate the gun.

In the meantime Frank examined the machinery and found that it had not been injured much by the fall.

He quickly put it in order.

The running gear was not broken.

There were a number of dents in the car, but she was manageable, and he returned to the turret and started her.

Running over the top of the debris in any direction was not possible, but there were places across which the Fox could jolt and turn, and when she was under way Barney could discharge the gun in almost any direction.

That turned the tide of the battle.

So many of the Aztecs felt that the rest became discouraged and finally climbed out of the trench.

The continued failure on their part to inflict injury, coupled with appalling execution created by the gun finally drove them away from the ruin entirely.

As soon as the firing ceased, Frank drove the Fox over to the door in the wall leading to the treasure chamber.

Barney and Pomp were then apprised of their discovery of the gold, and then the inventor said:

"We must take advantage of this lull in the fight, and get the gold aboard," said Frank, in conclusion.

All agreed, and the work began.

They carried the treasure one by one and stowed it on the Fox.

When it was all aboard, they then devised a means of getting the Fox up on the plateau again.

The scheme was to break an incline in one of the walls of the depression, up which the machine could run.

This was done by firing the gun at the wall.

Great masses of dirt were blown away, and by repeatedly firing at the same spot, a wide trench was excavated.

In this manner a road was made.

There was great difficulty in getting the heavily-laden car out of the depression, but under Frank's skillful management it was finally accomplished.

Once on the plateau, in the woods, they saw the Aztecs skulking about among the trees intently watching them.

A bee-line was made for the road.

Frank then sent the Fox back the way she came.

Nothing was done by the natives to interfere with her, except to shoot arrows from a distance.

The appalling weapons our friends wielded had instilled a great respect in their mind for the electric car.

Besides, now that the Aztecs saw the Fox retreating, they did not want to do anything to deter her.

On the contrary, they were glad to get rid of our friends.

Along ran the machine rapidly.

It was all down-hill work now.

The machinery was hardly used.

Frank kept his hand on the air-brake lever, for this was brought into use more than anything else.

As they glided by the almost deserted village, Frank said:

"They have practically withdrawn all opposition. They seem to be glad we are clearing out of here."

"It's sorry I am entiorely," said Barney in tones of deep regret.

"Begorra, I'd sooner be 'breakin' their heads nor runnin' away from thim, d'yer moind."

"For my part," said Charley, "I'm glad they have given up the fight. Those people could have done us a great deal of mischief had they been so inclined. However, we've got the gold and now have only to get away from here as soon as possible and return to civilization."

"Dar am de terraces, Massa Frank," said Pomp, as the car ran close to the cliff of the canyon where the deluge occurred.

A short distance off to the left, there was a huge mud-flat.

This had been the bed of a lake which had emptied its water down into the canyon through the broken dam.

In a short time the machine was on the lower plateau.

"Not a sign of the Aztecs here," commented Frank, smilingly.

"Dey mus' hab gib up de fight," Pomp replied.

"How does the car run with her extra heavy weight?"

"Very well, Charley. I can only observe a difference when going down the declivities when an extra momentum is imparted to the machine by the weight, and makes me use the brake a good deal."

The Fox ran down to the place where the flood had poured from the canyon, and then headed for the terraces.

Only a tiny stream was coming from the canyon now, but the ground showed the recent inundation.

Numerous logs, heaps of mud, and a large quantity of debris was scattered over the plateau.

Crossing the plateau the Fox reached the terrace top.

This was the steepest descent to be made, and Frank took a firm hold of the brake lever.

Down went the car, the brake shoe gripping the rims and, in a measure, slackening her speed.

She was so much heavier now that it required all of the young inventor's skill to prevent her from plunging ahead at a tremendous velocity.

The Fox cleared the first terrace without danger.

But when she was half way down the second one, the strain on the brake shoe became so great that it suddenly broke with a report like a pistol shot.

With nothing to check her now, she rushed ahead.

Down the steep hill she went plunging, gathering speed every moment until she was going like a lightning express train.

A cry of alarm rose from her crew.

Frank dared not turn her now for it might wreck her.

He seized the steering wheel firmly, and held her on a straight course.

CHAPTER XII.

USING THE ELECTRICITY.

"Hold on, or you'll get your necks broken!"

"Be heavens, she'll thrip herself—I know she will."

"Can't you turn her into the bushes, Frank?"

"If he do dat, she am gwine fo' ter hit de rocks, too."

"We've got to go down, boys—the brake is broken."

Down, down, down they shot, the car rocking and swaying, the dirt flying up in showers, and the Fox threatening to go over at every lurch.

As they struck the landings at the foot of each terrace, the machine dashed across them at awful rapidity and went plunging down the next hill.

It was a terrible ride.

Every one's nerves were strained with suspense.

Along they flew furiously, but Frank remained as cool and collected as if nothing unusual was happening.

Upon his nerve depended their lives.

His clear eyes quickly noted each advantageous spot, and he directed the Fox with a skill that was simply marvelous.

He only had the fraction of a second to note where she was going, and but little more time to keep steering.

In a remarkably brief space of time, though, she reached the base of the hill and shot away on the level ground—safe!

A ringing cheer burst from the relieved crew.

Frank then reversed the machinery gradually and the Fox was soon brought to a standstill at the foot of the mountain.

"Safe enough!" commented the inventor, quietly.

"Be ther poker an' Moses! it's a miracle!" declared Barney.

"No, it is merely an exhibition of wonderful courage!" Charley declared.

"Specs we done bettah fix dat brake," suggested the coon.

His practical view pleased the rest, and they alighted and closely examined the broken shoe.

It was necessary to make a new one at once, as the broken one could not be repaired.

As there were many steep descents to be made during the trip away from the mountain, they could not go on without the brake, and the work was begun.

The shadows of twilight fell ere it was repaired, and the coon prepared supper to which they all sat down.

"We have nothing more to fear from the Aztecs now," said Frank during the course of the meal. "We have filled them with such a wholesome dread of our arms, I don't believe they will venture to the foot of the mountain to attack us."

"What do be your intintions wid regard ter ther gold?" Barney inquired. "Shure we can't lug it iverwhere we go!"

"That's a fact," assented Charley. "I think we had better sell it at the first city we reach."

"Mus' be mo' dan ten millyun dollars wuth," said Pomp.

"Not quite," laughed Frank. "A fair estimate of its value would be at a rough guess about \$500,000."

"It's a rich man yez are, Charley."

"Oh, I get only a quarter of it, Barney."

"How am dat?"

"Because it is to be divided equally."

"It will not do to return to Hidalgo," said Frank.

"No, indade. Sure the spalpeens there would ait us."

"Where shall we head for then?" asked Charley.

"Vera Cruz. We can there get a steamer bound for the north."

They discussed the plan of travel for some time.

It was finally agreed to follow the course to Vera Cruz.

This understanding had hardly been reached, when suddenly they were startled to see a rifle thrust through each of the four windows.

As these deadly weapons covered them, a voice outside roared:

"Hands up!"

All obeyed the stern mandate.

Refusal meant certain death.

There followed an interval of silence.

The four gazed blankly at each other.

"Who are they?" Frank asked.

In the gloom outside, he saw a man's face at each window, and observed that they were clad in the garb of Mexicans.

The rear door banged open and several men entered, carrying revolvers in their hands, and at their head strode Sancho Pedro.

Frank and his companions recognized the bandit at once.

"By thunder—our old enemy!" cried the inventor.

"Yes, it's Sancho Pedro," groaned Charley.

"Bedad, we're robbed," gasped Barney, dismally.

"All de fightin' an' trouble fo' nuffin," added Pomp.

There was a wicked grin on the Mexican's swarthy face as he regarded the helpless quartet.

Behind him came half a dozen of his men.

As Sancho Pedro paused, he said sarcastically in English:

"You are a nice set of fools."

"What do you want here?" demanded Frank.

"That's a silly question. Can't you realize that we were smart enough to let you get the gold, and then wait here until you appeared so we could take it from you?"

"So that was your game, eh?"

"Exactly so, senior. I am greatly obliged to you for getting the treasure for us. It has saved us a heap of trouble."

"You are a cheeky rogue."

"Senior, you compliment me: I felt very sorry to be obliged to follow Mr. Dunn all the way into Readestown in order to get the golden anklet away from him. But after all it did me no good. What a pity. However, since you so kindly did the work for us, it does not matter. We will now relieve you of it!"

"Rob us?"

"That is a harsh way of expressing it, but it's true."

As he said this, he turned to his followers and told them in Spanish to bind the four prisoners.

It was quickly done.

Then the bandits eagerly examined the golden ingots.

"It's worth a large fortune!" cried one, exultingly.

"With this precious metal, we can go out of the business," said Sancho Pedro, with a grin. "There's a king's ransom here."

"What shall we do with the prisoners, captain?"

"Lead them out, and tie them to the trees."

"If you do that," said Frank, quickly, "how are you going to get this electric car to the place you wish to go to with the gold?"

"Why—work the car ourselves."

"You can't do it."

"Let me see."

He entered the turret.

There he began to examine the mechanism.

Pretty soon his hands touched a live wire.

A wild yell escaped him.

He could not let go.

In rushed the men to see what ailed him.

Sancho Pedro was howling like a wild Indian.

He accompanied his voice by the most violent contortions.

"What's the matter?" gasped one of the men.

"Oh, oh! I'm full of electricity."

"Let go the wire, why don't you?"

"I can't! Oh, *por mi padre!* This is terrible!"

"Why can't you let go?"

"I don't know. Help me!"

The man seized his wrists, intending to pull his hands off the bare wire, but no sooner did he form a circuit with the bandit chief when he, too, received the current.

He swore, pulled at Sancho Pedro, and yelled for help.

"I'm caught! I'm caught, too!" he screamed, frantically.

"*Dios mio,*" gasped one of the astonished spectators.

"What does it mean?" asked another, in bewilderment.

They were all puzzled, as they knew nothing about the subtle current and felt very uneasy.

"Help us, you dogs!" yelled Sancho Pedro at them.

The men hesitated about obeying, for they had no desire to share the fate of the man who had gone to the captain's aid.

"Why don't you do something?" roared Sancho, wildly.

"I'm afraid," acknowledged one of them.

"Coward!"

"Perhaps Reade can stop it."

"Yes, yes! Fetch him here!"

One of the outlaws quickly obeyed.

Frank burst out laughing when he saw them.

"Getting a little shock, eh?" he asked, pleasantly.

"Little!" madly yelled Sancho. "It's terrible! Stop it!"

"I can't without pulling that bar out," said Frank, pointing at a brass hand rail firmly bolted to the wall.

"Well, pull it out!" roared the electrified villain.

"Me? Why, my strength alone isn't equal to it. Besides, I'm bound!"

"Release him and help him!" shouted Sancho. "Oh, oh, oh!"

One of the men displayed a revolver and growled:

"If you attempt any treachery, I'll fire at you!"

"Oh, I wouldn't dream of doing anything wrong," blandly said Frank.

The man then cut his bonds, and demanded:

"What are we to do?"

"All of you help me to pull this rod out. It will stop the electricity."

He seized it as he spoke, and pretended to pull strongly.

There were five men in the room, and they all grasped it.

As soon as he saw them all clasp the rail with both hands, Frank reached back with one hand, let go with the other and pushed over a switch.

It was the one that electrified the hull, and it sent such a current into that rail that all the bandits were shocked.

Such a terrific yell as they all let out was deafening.

With a rush Frank went through the car, and locked the rear door so no more of the gang could get in.

Those at the windows recoiled when they too felt the current and Frank rapidly closed the shutters and released his friends.

While so employed the men outside opened fire at the Fox.

CHAPTER XIII.

CALLING ON THE TROOPS.

A FUSILLADE of bullets banged against the electric machine, and several of them flew through the loopholes in the shutters.

Unluckily for our friends one of these bullets struck the wire to which Sancho Pedro was clinging, and cut it.

That broke the current and released the bandits.

All Frank's companions had armed themselves by that time, and seeing the Mexicans free in the front room, the inventor cried:

"Fire at them, or they'll kill us!"

Before the rest could carry out the order Sancho Pedro shut the door leading into the turret, and when the bullets came, they struck it, and failed to injure the villains.

Open went the dome windows the next moment, and out dove the rascals, glad to escape from their close quarters.

Frank flung open the door.

But the Mexicans had evacuated the dome.

A volley was fired into the turret at Frank, but he escaped it by closing the door again, and quickly issued this order:

"Shoot at it then through the loopholes!"

"Bedad I'll kill twinty wid wan shot!" cried Barney.

And they fired at the Mexicans.

The ones who were struck howled with pain.

While the diversion was at its height Frank rushed into the room, and closed the shutters.

He saw that the bandits were mounting their horses, which were tethered a short distance away.

"They are going to retreat!" he cried to his companions.

"Begob, they can't do it wid ther Fox's agility."

"Chase them! I'd like to punish Sancho Pedro," said Charley.

Frank turned the lever.

But the Fox did not budge.

Here was an unpleasant situation.

The Mexicans were almost certain to escape.

A moment's reflection showed Frank that the wire cut by the bullet was responsible for the trouble.

It severed the current and disabled the machine from operating.

"Why don't you go ahead?" roared Barney.

"I can't budge her," replied Frank; "she's injured!"

"Golly! dey am gallopin' away now!" Pomp shouted.

"It can't be helped!" said Frank; "I've got to repair her."

He went back to the store-room, got some tools and some wire and returning to the dome, he cut the broken wire out.

A new wire was replaced for it.

It occupied fully quarter of an hour to do the work.

By the end of that time the bandits had placed fully two miles between themselves and the machine.

No sooner was she repaired, however, when the inventor drove her ahead swiftly.

"They are heading in the very direction we wish to go," said Frank to his companions, as they crowded into the dome.

"Dar's about half ob dem wounded, too," said Pomp.

"Much as they wish to get the gold," said Frank. "they are all in-

spired with such fear of us that they won't stop now to dispute our possession of it."

"Bedad they kem up to us wid ther silence av cats whin they tuck us be surprise," remarked Barney, grimly. "Ther sneaky way av thim wor all that gev 'em ther grip av us."

"They won't have such a chance again," said Frank. "It was our own fault for relaxin' our vigilance. That tends to show you that in the moment of our most fancied security we are most inclined to be in danger."

"We're gainin' on 'em fast, now, Massa Frank!"

"How the wretches are riding!" Charley exclaimed. "I never saw a mustang so goaded before!"

On they flew hotly chasing the horsemen, and the gap between them rapidly narrowed down.

In a short time they arrived within half a mile of the bandits who were then heading for a belt of timber land.

Frank saw at once that they designed to get among the trees where the electric machine could not follow them.

Nor was his surmise wrong, for he soon saw the ponies dashing into the woods where there was not space enough for the broad car to pass between the tree trunks.

Nor could he see an opening anywhere that was wide enough for the Fox to proceed into the woods more than a few hundred feet.

Frank felt greatly disgusted.

"We can only run around the woods," said he, "and watch to see where the villains emerge."

"Faith it's a long roide foreinst us then," said Barney, "for the woods do be purty large, an' whoile we're on wan side, thim spalpeens will be goin' out av the other."

"There don't seem to be any alternative," remarked Charley.

"I've gwine ter keep a lookout den, honey," said Pomp, as he stationed himself at the window.

Frank turned the Fox to the right and sent her along rapidly.

The ground was very uneven and rocky, causing them many delays by making forced detours.

It occupied a long time to make a detour of the woods, but even then they failed to see the bandits.

Frank stopped the machine near where they entered the timber, and then said in earnest tones:

"I am of the opinion that they are hidden in the woods yet, and that they have made no attempt to get out."

"Den we kain't git at dem, kin we?" asked Pomp.

"Only by driving them out."

"I doan' see how yo' gwine ter done it."

"We must bombard the timber."

This plan was tried.

Projectiles were sent into the woods on all sides.

The car was kept moving in the meantime, and finally reached the other side of the trees, when Pomp shouted:

"Dar dey am—dar dey go!"

Frank saw the ruffians.

Fully a mile away they were galloping over the mesa and had evidently been driven from cover by the projectiles.

The machine at once continued the pursuit.

Frank saw the bandits reach a road, swerve to the right and gallop along the highway half hidden from view.

They were going toward the town of Yovego.

In a few minutes they were hidden from view below the high embankments through which ran the road.

The car soon reached the highway.

She followed it a short distance and then swung around a bend.

A hill ran up to the town, and coming down it was a troop of Mexican cavalry at a gallop toward the Fox.

Among the soldiers Frank saw the bandits.

"Hello! what does this mean?" he muttered, suspiciously.

"Fo' de lan' sakes, who am dey?" queried the coon.

"National guardsmen," replied Charley.

"But they have captured thim thaives," said the Celt.

"Oh, no," quickly interposed Frank. "They did not capture the rascals; they are on terms of friendship with them. Can't you see it? I think they've enlisted the soldiers' sympathy."

"Bedad, it do be luckin' that way," said Barney.

"I'm going to see what they are up to. See—they are pointing this way. We are the objects of their conversation."

The Fox stopped in the middle of the road.

On came the soldiers and the bandits.

Within a short time they reined in not far ahead of the Fox.

"Hello, there!" cried the captain of the guards in Spanish.

"Well, what do you wish?" asked Frank quietly.

"Your peaceful surrender, senor."

"Surrender—for what?"

"These men charge you with assault and robbery."

"What! Do they claim that we robbed them?"

"Yes, of a large amount of gold, which you have in that car."

"They lie most outrageously."

"But they are covered with wounds you inflicted."

"Very true. They got hurt while trying to rob us."

"I can scarcely credit that."

"Oh, that's because you naturally sympathize with your own countrymen. Don't you know that they are the gang of outlaws under the leadership of the notorious Sancho Pedro?"

"No, sir. I know nothing of the kind."

"If you wish to do the community a good turn, arrest them."

"On the contrary, I am going to arrest you, and force you to dis-

gorge your ill-gotten gold. And as these gentlemen have made it an object for us to succeed by offering to give us a portion of the gold, you may as well give in before we use violence."

"So they have bribed you to aid them to rob us?"

"Do not get insulting in your talk, senor."

"But that's just what it amounts to!" said Frank, quietly.

"Will you surrender, or not?"

"By no means; we do not intend to let you rob us under the guise of making a lawful act of it."

"Recollect, your refusal seals your fate——"

"Blaze away, my friend, blaze away," invited Frank, in cheerful tones. "We fail to submit!"

The captain swore at him with vexation, and turning to his men, he ordered them to present arms.

All the troops aimed their weapons at the Fox.

Frank was exasperated at the trick.

He resolved to put a quick end to the matter.

Without saying a word he pulled the starting lever over as far as it would go, and the machine darted ahead.

She dashed straight at the troops.

They fired.

In an instant the Fox was among them.

Right and left she scattered the horses.

An uproar of voices was heard.

Then a scene of the wildest excitement ensued.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

EVERY one of the horses were terrified by the Fox, for Frank had started the glaring search-light, and vivid sparks were snapping and crackling all over the wheels.

The electric gong the inventor rang added to the tumult, and the neighing and prancing horses became almost unmanageable.

Away they rushed from before the car.

Several were hastened by being struck.

Such violent movements ensued that it was not possible for the riders to gain accurate aim at the car.

Their object was to fire at the loopholes, as the bandits told the soldiers that these openings were the only points to be penetrated.

All of Sancho Pedro's men joined in the fight.

The air echoed with the crack of rifles and pistols.

Loud, furious shouts and imprecations rang out.

Thinking this was his only chance to get the gold, the bandit chief acted like a madman in his violent efforts to get his men to capture the electric machine.

"Fire at the loopholes!" he yelled. "Don't let them escape!"

"I'll put a stop to your malicious work!" Frank muttered.

He aimed his pistol at the wretch and fired.

Bang! went the shot.

"Oh, *ave Maria*! I'm killed!" yelled Sancho.

He flung up his hands and toppled from his mustang, and the soldiers made a furious dash at the Fox.

Frank pulled the lever all the way over.

The full current was put on.

It forced the electric car ahead at such a pace that she very quickly burst her way through the troops.

They were left behind.

On she rushed like a whirlwind.

The soldiers and bandits pursued her.

They were merely wasting time, though, for she outstripped them so fast they were soon left far in the rear.

Into the town dashed the Fox.

The streets were almost deserted, and she sped through them so fast that the inhabitants who were yet about did not have a fair look at her.

Reaching the opposite side of the town a good road was encountered which led them away from the place.

"We may as well keep on running," said Frank. "It is simply useless to remain and invite a fight with the soldiers."

"Kain't gain nuffin' by it," Pomp commented.

"The troops were equally as bad as the bandits," said Charley.

"They knew the character of that gang, and yet upheld them, with the hope of sharing the spoils. Well, that comes of the government poorly paying its troops."

"Bedad, I niver see a devil bowled down claner than yer tuck aould Sancho Pedro from his nag," chuckled Barney. "But I'm sorry ter say ye only winged him, Mather Frank, for the ball only wounded ther spalpeen."

"I had no desire to execute him," replied Frank quietly. "Let the law handle him. I wouldn't be surprised to hear that the soldiers turned on the bandits and arrested them when they find there is nothing to be gained by befriending them."

The car ran on all night, Barney and Pomp playing the fiddle and banjo.

Nothing more was seen of the soldiers or the bandits after that.

In the morning they were many leagues from the mountain, and heading for Vera Cruz as fast as they could go.

Every one was delighted with the success they met with, in spite of the many obstacles in their way.

"Bedad," said Barney to the coon, who was steering, after breakfast, "it wor wan av ther finest trips I iver was on. Sure we've had ructions enough ter kape us busy breakin' heads from ther day we forst landed in this quare place. Did yer mind how I fit?"

"G'way," scoffed Pomp. "Yo' didn' do nuffin' much."
 "I didn't?" grinned Barney; "why me first shot biffed wan av them in ther'jug like this," and he banged Pomp on the back. "Me second tuck another wan in ther' jure loike this," and he gave the coon a thump in the neck that made his teeth rattle. "And the last wan —"

"Stop dat!" roared Pomp, angrily.

"Ther last wan," proceeded Barney, with a grin, "caught ther feller a twishter loike this," and he heaved off his big brogan and aimed a kick at Pomp's coat tails.

But the exasperated coon was ready for him.

He did not fancy the Irishman's forcible method of illustrating what happened, and sprang out of harm's way.

At the same time he seized Barney's foot as it flew up in the air, and gave it a tremendous jerk.

"I've got yo'!" he grunted.

"Murder!" roared Barney.

And he went to the floor in a sitting posture with such force that he saw myriads of imaginary stars.

"Hooray!" roared the delighted coon.

"Faix, me backbone is broke," groaned Barney.

"Dat am de way I dropped de greasers," said Pomp.

"Is it rough-an'-tumble yer givin' me?"

"I've only expoundin' de trufe."

"Ah! I've been poundin' ther' flure, Pomp, ye black-an'-tan Indian, it's 'tit-fer-tat yer tryin'!"

"Reckon it am, honey."

"Shake hands. It's even we are," said Barney, rising.

"Go way dar, chile, or I've gwine ter pull a razzah on yo'!" the coon replied, well knowing that if once he got in the grip of the Celt he would get his fingers squeezed into a jelly, or else get jerked through the air like an acrobat.

The entrance of Frank just then put an end to their practical joking, and the young inventor asked:

"Have you been keeping her on a steady course?"

"As neah as possible," Pomp replied.

"There's a town ahead there, and we may be able to get some information there regarding the best route to follow in or to reach Vera Cruz quickest."

"Yo' bettah stay heah den ter do de talkin', as we doan speak yer furrin tongues," advised Pomp, who did not wish to be left alone with Barney.

Frank assented to this as they were near the town.

The machine rapidly approached the place, and her crew observed that the approach of the Fox had been noticed by the inhabitants long before they reached the place.

The appearance of the machine seemed to create the most intense excitement which our friends attributed to her singular look.

Hundreds of the Mexicans surrounded her as she slackened speed, and pulled up on the outskirts of the settlement.

Frank opened the window and to his surprise he heard them furiously denouncing him and his companions.

"I say," he shouted, "can you direct me to——"

"Come out of there!" yelled a man interrupting him.

"Why—what's the matter here?"

"Matter enough!" growled the man furiously. "There are some people here from Hidalgo, who have told us about your unlawful actions there, and warned us that you will repeat them here. But I can tell you, senor, that we will not allow it. You shall be taken into custody!"

"The inhabitants of that town deserved——"

"Deserved nothing!" roared the man. "There is a complaint lodged against you here, and we demand your surrender for trial before the judge for your past misdeeds!"

"What! You purpose arresting us?"

"Yes, sir, and if you resist we will tear you and your infernal machine to pices!"

Frank whistled.

Here was an ugly state of affairs.

Only prompt action would save them from violent treatment at the hands of these people, so he slammed the shutters and put on the full current.

Through the crowd dashed the Fox rapidly.

Afraid of being run over, they scattered and fled in all directions, and a shower of missiles were hurled after her.

Off she dashed at a high rate of speed, and the hooting and yelling rabble chased her a long way.

They finally ran away from the crowd and left them far behind.

It was a long journey to Vera Cruz, but they finally finished the journey and got shelter at a house on the suburbs.

Frank then went to the city and arranged for the sale of the gold.

When it was consummated a larger sum than was anticipated was gained, and as Charley insisted upon an equal division, each one received a large sum of money.

The Fox was then taken apart and placed aboard a steamer for Boston on which the four friends took passage.

Before they left Vera Cruz news reached there that Sancho and his gang had been arrested, were tried for their villainies and fared the penalty of the law.

His rascality in regard to the golden anklet had done him no for our friends had triumphed anyway.

The steamer left Mexico.

After a safe passage she reached Boston.

Here our friends debarked and made their way to Readstown where the cases containing the electric car and their effects.

They were warmly welcomed home.

Here Charley Dunn left them and went to Chicago, where he embarked in business and prospered.

Frank, Barney and Pomp settled in their old quarters, and the young inventor devoted his time to the arrangement of another electrical wonder.

The result of his experiments will be disclosed in another story of his adventures to be published soon in this library.

And as our kind readers will again meet with the three friends, and this account of their adventures is concluded, we will bid them adieu.

[THE END.]

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